

TODAY'S CATHOLIC

WEDDING

FAQ

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Look at marriage and faith through the years

BY KAREN CLIFFORD

Today's Catholic spoke with three couples in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend about how faith and the Church have influenced their marriage, and what characteristics contribute to its success. The couples who participated are Annette and Dan Stobierski, married for over 46 years, Kitty and Tim Fulnecky married for over 32 years, and Lisa and Nick Marino married for over eight years.

Today's Catholic: What does your faith bring into the marriage?

The Stobierskis

Annette: I believe that the love between a husband and wife must be like the enduring love God has for us, who loves us no matter what and that we forgive each other as we are forgiven by Jesus. Having five children in four years and four months was definitely a challenge. Our third and fourth were twins and 19 months later our youngest son was born, six weeks early. Dan and I had incompatible blood types and the antibodies in my body were harming the baby. We were told that he could be stillborn or severely brain damaged. I put the entire situation into God's hands and said to Him that I had the four little children to care for so He had to handle this problem. Fortunately, live blood donors were available. The baby's blood was exchanged three times in 24 hours and today he has a successful career.

Dan: Faith is the foundation of our lives. It determines what we believe to be right or wrong, good or bad and that, in turn, defines how we live our lives. If you have faith in God then you believe that, through prayer, God will help and guide you. We have to make personal decisions that affect the entire family and I believe prayer has guided some of these decisions. There was one particular job change that I prayed about very strongly. I made the decision and two years later the company I left closed. That would have been a very serious situation with five teenagers.

The Fulneckys

Kitty: Our faith has been the foundation of our family. We have always prayed, practiced the sacraments, and prayed the rosary and the family rosary. Even before we were married, we prayed and asked God if our relationship was meant to be. I believed that a family that prays together stays together.

Tim: We've been blessed by God, and have had the conviction that you are never given more than you can handle. For example



Annette and Dan Stobierski, parishioners of St. Anthony Parish in Angola.

when illness has come to the family, we have been given the grace to accept the illness and learn to live with and deal with it, without questioning why or becoming bitter or discouraged. Also, our faith helped us get through rough times when I had to work many extra hours and it was like Kitty was a single parent to our six kids.

The Marinos

Lisa: I have discovered that during my pregnancies Nick has prayed that he could bear the pain of childbirth for me. Indeed, he has experienced various physical pains that ended with the birth of each child, while I have enjoyed extremely short labors. This has united Nick and me on a very deep level. Our deepest sorrow has been the loss of three of our children in miscarriage. These were very dark and difficult times for me, and I encountered God's presence and comfort only through Nick at those times. I couldn't feel God's closeness, but I knew in my mind that through our marriage sacrament God would help Nick lead me out of the darkness, and so I could trust Nick with a really raw, vulnerable trust. Our shared faith helped us as a couple see God's hand and God's mercy even in these losses, and this has positively influenced how much more we see our four children here on earth as a gift from God.

Nick: My faith and my marriage are the two biggest graces in my life that work together to ultimately define who I am as I discern God's will for me. My faith is a constant source of joy and strength for me, and helps my marriage daily as I look for ways to lead my wife and family in purity, humility and holiness. In tough times, focusing on the Cross has helped me get through the loss of our miscarriages — by abandoning myself to God's will as Jesus did.

Today's Catholic: In what ways can the Church help to support married couples?



Tim and Kitty Fulnecky, parishioners of St. Pius X Parish in Granger.

The Stobierskis

Annette: I would suggest a workshop after three to six months of marriage that deals with discussing problems newlyweds have encountered and have professionals help them so they feel the Church really cares about them. The Church could sponsor a newly married couples club to socialize and pray together; have potlucks, games, nights out and be with like minded people. Counseling sessions should be readily available to couples who are willing to discuss their problems and truly want to solve them.

Dan: Some married couples need support because they had a poor foundation for marriage. The foundation for a good marriage must be established by the time young people start dating. I believe that young people should be taught the true meaning of love, sex, marriage and commitment. This could be in conjunction with Confirmation classes. It is important that they have a full understanding of these values and that these values are set by God, not simply dictated by the Church. They have to know why secular society is wrong and why the Church teachings are correct. This cannot be done in one or two sessions, but must be a comprehensive class. This approach could go a long way in improving marriages and reducing divorces.

The Fulneckys

Kitty: I think it would be helpful if there were more opportunities/classes in adult catechesis to help us grow as individuals and couples. Our parish, St. Pius X in Granger, is great at having classes (usually free) on parenting, young adult topics, communication skills, financial issues, theology (for example the recent series on the theology of the body), natural family planning, spiritual practices, types of prayer and so on. The list is endless. It is also important to offer child care at these whenever possible because that is a huge issue when you



Lisa and Nick Marino, parishioners of St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend

have children. Opportunities for parish and community service are important because marriage is about self-giving and serving others teach us how to do this lovingly.

Tim: For a marriage to be strong, couples need to take their spiritual lives seriously. As much as a marriage needs to grow and deepen, so does our individual prayer life. I have grown more deeply in my spiritual life, and find that daily Mass, prayer and frequent reception of the sacrament of Reconciliation give me the grace I need to be a better person, husband and father. Anything the Church can do to foster this is helpful.

The Marinos

Lisa: It would be wonderful if the Church offered a retreat for married couples that simply focused on Christ. Currently, there are great retreats available for married couples to come together to focus on enriching their marriage, however the Christo-centric retreats seem to be offered only for all men or all women. A Christo-centric retreat where married couples could participate together in order to approach Christ together and to grow in Christ together would be great.

Nick: I feel the sacramental life of the Church is immensely helpful in marriage, particularly the Eucharist, Adoration and monthly Confession. Taking advantage of mothers or fathers groups within your parish or marriage retreats are also helpful.

Today's Catholic: What characteristics do you find make for a successful marriage?

The Stobierskis

Annette: Before a person considers marriage and a partnership, he or she should be a successful, independent person, able to support themselves and someone else. He or she should be confident, honest, generous, compas-

sionate and not self seeking. Prospective partners should have respect for each other. When I hear someone say "I am getting married," I immediately think, "How can that be, one person does not get married!"

Dan: Loyalty and commitment. The family has to come first. Selfishness can only destroy a marriage. A "me first" attitude is probably the greatest cause of divorce. If husband and wife each give of themselves completely, for the benefit of the other, without asking for anything in return, they will have a rock solid marriage that nothing will be able to destroy.

The Fulneckys

Kitty: For us having the same faith and values has been huge. We have found it important not only to share our faith, but also to become effective communicators at every level. We have been very committed to each other and our marriage. Faith helped me trust that God knew what he was doing and that if I was faithful, growth would come through trial. Our marriage ended up stronger because we tried not to see any trouble as a dead end. We never looked at divorce as a way of solving anything, so we just worked through difficulties. We did have our moments when one or both of us was not happy.

Tim: Generosity, caring, giving, willing to compromise, willing to accept contrary points of view, realizing there may be another right way, having a sense of humor and having a sense of humility.

The Marinos

Lisa: Each spouse must work toward a humility that allows herself/himself to be led by the other, to learn from the other, to be (lovingly) corrected by the other, and to put the other first in all things. Humility also leads to a spirit of service, which is another important characteristic in marriage. Often, before we even get out of bed in the morning, Nick will ask me, "How can I serve you today?" and then he follows through on any request I make. His service to me can range from calling a repairman, to bringing home a pizza for dinner, to praying for me or just being patient with some fault of mine while I try to work on it.

Nick: In my opinion, the foundation of a successful marriage is to joyfully abandon yourself daily in service to your spouse and family — all in an effort to get them to heaven. To do this, Jesus must be the center of your marriage and the source of your strength. This takes a great deal of humility, trust, patience and love — all found in the Cross. This abandonment really does bring me great joy and freedom.

FAQ

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Diocesan offices answer frequently asked questions

FAQ: What is the symbolism of the rings?

Office of Worship: As proclaimed by the bride and groom within the actual Marriage rite, the rings symbolize “love and fidelity.” Gold bands call to mind permanence, purity and beauty within the sacramental union. Moreover, they are given from one spouse to another, attesting to the total gift of self in matrimony.

FAQ: Whatever happened to the unity candle?

Office of Worship: Beyond the fact that they are not part of the Marriage rites, “unity candles” are inappropriate for wedding Masses because they draw the connection and focus away from the true source and symbol of unity, the Eucharist, from which the sacrament of Marriage flows. The vows and the declaration of consent, coupled with the sacramentals that are the rings, are what publicly and powerfully convey the real union of the spouses in a Catholic wedding. Lighting an extra candle that gets blown out at the end of Mass is really not the best symbol of covenantal permanence.

FAQ: Can we have “our song” in the wedding? It’s a pop song.

Office of Worship: The wedding is a sacred event, and the music at such a sacred event must reflect this fact. Secular music does not belong before, during, or after the rite within the sacred space of the church. Favorite secular or popular songs of the couple belong at the reception or at another time during the wedding festivities that do not occur within the liturgy itself.

FAQ: Should the witnesses be Catholic, at least the best man and maid of honor?

Office of Worship: Strictly speaking, while it would probably be preferable to have Catholic witnesses, the witnesses function primarily to attest that the Marriage was celebrated. Therefore, they need not be Catholic. However, the authorized witness who officiates must be a priest or deacon.

FAQ: My fiancé is not Catholic. Should we have a Mass?

Office of Worship: A nuptial Mass is obviously the ideal. It is sometimes the case that it would be better to highlight the unity of the couple rather than the differences. If the couple had a Mass, one partner would not be able to receive the Eucharist since he or she would not be Catholic, and, most likely, most of the non-Catholic’s family would not be Catholic. Therefore, it might sometimes be sensible for the couple to have the Rite of Marriage outside of Mass.

FAQ: My fiancé is not Catholic and wants to marry in her church? How would the Church recognize the marriage? What can we do for the Church to recognize the sacramentality of the marriage?

Office of Worship: Answers to such questions about Marriage outside the Church can be very complex. The most basic requirement to ensure validity in this situation is for the diocese, through the bishop’s authority, to give a dispensation both to marry a non-Catholic and to marry outside the Catholic Church. But for any such Marriage questions, couples should consult the pastor, who may refer you to a canon lawyer.

FAQ: Can my non-Catholic friend proclaim the Scripture we choose?

Office of Worship: A lector at a Mass should be a person in full communion with the Catholic Church, a person

who is serious about the practice of their faith and a person who is willing to complete the appropriate formation process. Proclaiming the Scriptures or reading the intercessions is not a role a non-Catholic can take in the Mass, unless the diocesan bishop specifically grants an extraordinary exception to non-Catholic Christian. However, if the Marriage rites are taking place outside of Mass, then there would not be any problem with a baptized non-Catholic doing the readings.

FAQ: I have children from a previous relationship, how or should they participate?

Office of Worship: Depending upon the age of the child, they could serve as a member of the bridal party (bridesmaid, groomsman, flower girl, ring bearer). Also, if the child is of the appropriate age, is a practicing Catholic and has received the appropriate training and/or commission, they could be a proclaimer of a Scripture reading or serve as an extraordinary minister of holy Communion (during a Mass).

FAQ: I need the whole morning to decorate the church. Father said we can’t decorate to that extent. Why?

Office of Worship: While reasonable decoration is allowed for festive liturgical events, there are several reasons why one should not completely revamp the entire church and sanctuary.

First, the proper décor for the particular liturgical season is a factor. Some seasons require that liturgies refrain from too much fanfare and display (see the next question about Advent and Lenten weddings).

Also, having the sanctuary redecorated could conflict with the decorations planned for other weddings or liturgies to be held in the church on the same day.

Furthermore, additional decorations should not distract from the primary focus, which is the divine liturgy itself. The sanctuary is the place where the altar stands, where the word of God is proclaimed and where the priest and deacon exercise their office. The church, after all, is the house of God, and it has a dignity and purpose of its own — a purpose that lends context to the celebration of holy Matrimony, not the other way around. The beautification of the church should serve this purpose, and pastors work to ensure this. The reception after the wedding would also be the appropriate location for more whimsical and creative decoration.

FAQ: Is getting married during Lent or Advent discouraged by the Church?

Office of Worship: While Catholics are allowed to marry during Advent and Lent, they are not necessarily the best opportunities for overly festive liturgical celebrations. Particularly in Lent, the decoration and music during liturgies should correspond to the more austere nature of the season, which is characterized by penitence and restraint in preparation for the Sacred Triduum. For example, except for certain high feast days in Lent, the altar is not allowed to have floral decoration. Moderate floral decoration is prescribed for Advent as well.

FAQ: I am close to a pastor from my youth? Could he celebrate the Marriage rite?

Office of Worship: Some parishes may allow outside priests to officiate. However, couples should speak to the pastor about such things. Also, for any liturgical event, a priest brought in from outside the diocese must officially register with the diocese prior to the event.

FAQ: Do Catholics hold Masses outdoors, in parks, state parks, etc.?

Office of Worship: The norm in canon law is that Marriages should take place in a church. The church is the house of God, and the proper place where the Eucharistic Liturgy is celebrated with the Christian community. It is not the practice in this diocese to grant outdoor exceptions.

FAQ: Does the Church ever approve of the use of artificial birth control?

Office of Family Life: The Church teaches that every act of sexual love must remain open to the possibility of new life. This is because God has designed sex with both a love-giving and a life-giving purpose, and when couples choose to engage in sex, they must accept the act as God designed it. The only time that the Church approves of artificial birth control is when a woman has been raped, and the possibility exists of preventing the sperm from fertilizing an egg. In this situation, because the woman did not freely choose to engage in sex, she has the right to defend herself from a possible pregnancy. In addition, sometimes a physician prescribes artificial hormones such as those in the “Pill,” not for the purpose of birth control but to treat or correct an underlying condition in the woman. When used for the purpose of restoring the proper functioning of the body, the Church approves of the use of these artificial hormones.

FAQ: What does the Church approve? How can I learn more?

Office of Family Life: The Church approves of methods of natural family planning (NFP), which teach couples to observe and interpret the naturally occurring signs of fertility in a woman’s body. The presence or absence of these signs allow couples to identify the days when conception is most likely should they desire to achieve a pregnancy, or to refrain from sexual relations on those days when conception is possible should they desire to avoid a pregnancy. International studies have confirmed that when

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Fostering communication and intimacy in the first years of marriage

BY LISA EVERETT

1. Deepen your relationship with Christ and make him a real partner in your marriage.

Never forget the fact that Christ performed His first miracle at a wedding feast! This shows how highly He values the love between man and woman in marriage and wants to grace it with His presence. When two baptized Christians come before the altar to be married, we not only make promises to one another — Christ makes a promise to us. Like a faithful friend, He promises to be with us for better and for worse, in good times and in bad, when our cup is overflowing and when the wine is running out.

Remember Christ's encounter with the two disciples on the road

to Emmaus? Christ approached them and asked them what they were discussing as they went on their way, and they poured out their hearts to Him. Now imagine those two disciples as a husband and wife, traveling on their life's journey, a journey that Christ has joined. "What are you discussing as you go on your way?" he asks. Letting Christ be part of our conversations as husband and wife is another word for "prayer." We tell Him our hopes and dreams, our difficulties and struggles, our needs and our delights in our life together, and we listen to His word, whether that word comes to us in a passage from Scripture or in the silence of our hearts.

But like the good friend that He is, Christ does not force Himself on us. Although He always takes the initiative to

accompany us on the journey of our married life together, He wants to be invited to stay. Recall that when night had fallen on the road to Emmaus and the two disciples were ready to stop, Christ made as if He were going on. "Stay with us!" the pair entreated him, and He remained with them and they recognized Him in the breaking of the bread. When we invite Christ to stay with us — making time to talk to Him and listen to Him in prayer, meeting Him in the Eucharist and in the sacrament of Penance — we will experience His presence in marvelous ways in our married lives.

This is not ivory tower idealism disconnected from reality. Studies show that married couples who attend church services regularly have stronger marriages and are less likely to divorce than

those who do not do so. These studies further show that couples who make shared prayer a regular part of their life together have even stronger marriages.

2. Commit to investing significant time and effort in making your marriage great.

Marriage calls for a complete gift of self between husband and wife. So a successful marriage cannot be a 50-50 proposition, where each spouse seeks to live out only his or her half of the bargain. Each spouse needs to strive to give 100 percent to the other, to make the complete gift of self they pledged on the altar a reality in daily life. This means that we have to expect to work hard to make our marriage a success. Accustomed as we are in our culture to fast food, instant cash and TV remotes, many of us enter marriage with an expectation of instant gratification in our relationship with each other. But building a real relationship takes work and it takes time. In marriage, as in the family life that flows from it, we need to make quantities of quality time for each other. This means, among other things, making a commitment to limit time spent in front of the

TV and on the Internet, because these activities, pleasurable as they are, can consume huge quantities of time that should be spent with our spouse. After attending alone a talk on married love at her local parish, one wife was heard to lament: "If my husband spent half as much time with me as he does on the Internet, I'd be a happy woman." Begin early in your marriage to give each other the first fruits of your days and nights, rather than the crumbs of time leftover from the multimedia feast.

3. Appreciate your differences and make them enrich your marriage.

St. Augustine once said of the moral life of believers: "In what is necessary, unity. In what is dubious, liberty; and in everything, charity." This is a good maxim to put into practice in marriage, especially in the early years. While it is essential that a husband and wife share the same vision of marriage as a complete gift of self for life that is open to children, there are many legitimate and even delightful differences that a husband and wife bring to their new life together. Discuss what gifts each of you bring to your marriage, beginning

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with your masculinity and femininity, and go on to look at your talents and temperaments, your interests and abilities. Try to see how they can complement each other rather than cause conflict between you, and how you can best put these different gifts at the service of each other and eventually, your children.

4. Establish your identity as a couple, building on the best from both of your backgrounds.

It is crucial that during the first few years of marriage, a husband and wife cement their identity as a couple. This means that, while all of us are part of a wider circle of family and friends, when we marry our relationship with our spouse takes precedence. It also means that, while the opinions and advice of relatives, especially those of parents, should receive a respectful hearing, it should ultimately be the couple themselves who discuss things openly and make decisions. This is also the time to reflect on what gifts each of you has been given from your own background — family traditions and ethnic customs, special ways of celebrating holidays, styles of communicating, expressions of faith, prayer and service, etc. ... — and incorporate the best of both “worlds” into your own married life and one day pass on to your children.

5. Communicate regularly with honesty and kindness.

It may surprise some newly-



weds to know that research has shown that 93 percent of communication in marriage is nonverbal. Over half of this nonverbal communication consists of body language, especially facial expressions, and almost half consists of tone of voice. This means that we can say a lot to our spouse, for better or worse, without even

opening our mouths. But we also need to make time to converse with each other — every day to catch up and chat, and on a regular basis for more lengthy, serious discussion on topics that are important for our marriage. Especially in the latter context, it is important to cultivate an attitude of openness and receptivity

to what my spouse is saying or sharing with me, including nonverbal cues. I must also be willing to share with my spouse, in a loving manner, what is truly on my mind and heart. It is good to begin a habit in the first years of marriage of trying to include in our communication with one another each of the elements traditionally used in prayer with God: praise, thanks, asking for forgiveness and asking for what we need. If these things form the substance of our conversation with God, it stands to reason that they also will nurture our communication our spouse.

6. Learn how to resolve arguments constructively.

Communication between a husband and wife will occasionally develop into an argument, perhaps involving an angry confrontation. Keeping in mind the acronym H.A.L.T. will help minimize “escalation”: never have a serious discussion when either of you is Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired or strapped for Time. When disagreements do arise, make sure to stay focused on the issue at hand; don’t bring up other problems or reopen old discussions. Refrain from making accusations about each other’s motives and limit yourselves to discussing specific behaviors or actions that are bothering you. Avoid using emotional exaggerations like “always” and “never” and absolutely forego making personal attacks, whether emo-

tional or physical. Even in the heat of emotion, make a commitment to let your words be tools with which to build rather than weapons with which to wound. Invite Christ into your conversation and ask him to show you what course of action best serves the common good, regardless of who “wins.”

7. Make sure your emotional “deposits” far exceed your “withdrawals”

Christian psychologist Gary Smalley uses an analogy from banking to illustrate how to build emotional intimacy in marriage. Just as couples make deposits and withdrawals of money in their bank account, they also make deposits and withdrawals in each other’s emotional tank. A deposit often involves something done with or for my spouse, acts of self-giving, sacrifices made, putting the other person first, deferring to my spouse’s personal preferences, etc. ... A withdrawal, on the other hand, is anything that offends the dignity of my spouse — a harsh word, an unkept promise, a selfish decision. Research has shown that in loving, long-lasting marriages, there is a ratio of five “deposits” for every “withdrawal.” So make sure that your marriage gets off of the right foot in the first few years by starting an emotional “savings account” in which your acts of loving kindness to each other gain interest.

Office of Family Life, Diocese of Fort Wayne–South Bend

Diocesan Marriage & Family Conference

Notre Dame Conference Center • Saturday, March 20, 2010

Come & join Bishop Kevin Rhoades and Professor Janet Smith

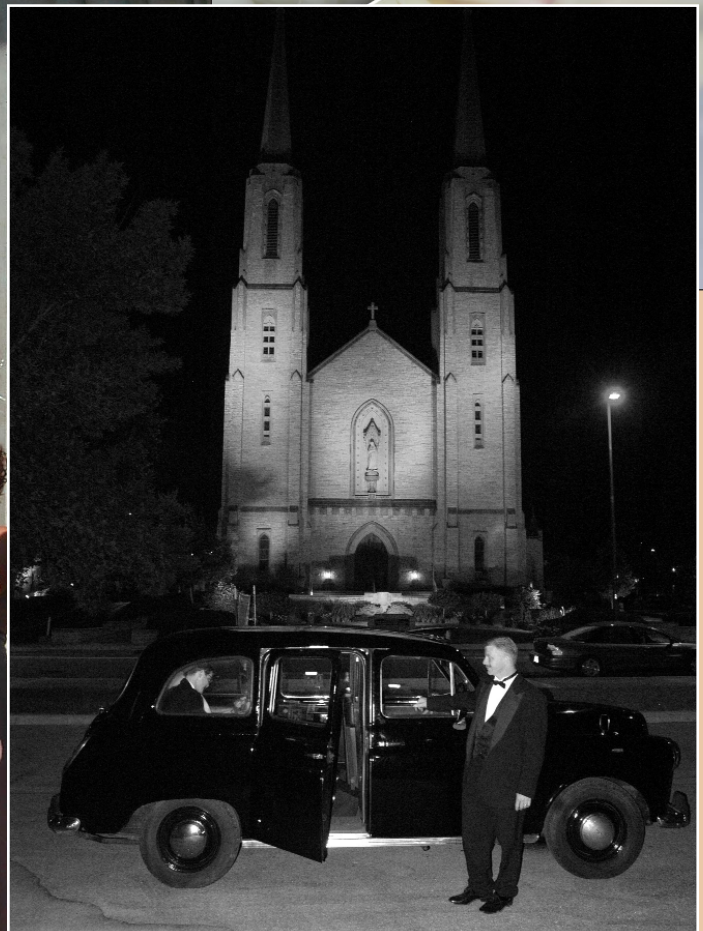
This inaugural diocesan conference aims to deepen the understanding of marriage and family life as a vocation from God and encourage an appreciation of its many dimensions. Through a combination of plenary sessions and several series of workshops, this conference will explore the Church’s rich vision of marriage and family life as it relates to topics such as the theology of the body, communication and intimacy, financial stewardship, responsible parenthood, dealing with infertility, and raising teens. A series of workshops also will be presented in Spanish.

- 9:00 AM Registration and Continental Breakfast
- 10:00 AM Welcome & Plenary Session One: The Vocation of Marriage *Bishop Kevin Rhoades*
- 11:15 AM Workshop Session One, followed by Lunch
- 12:55 PM Plenary Session Two: Life-Giving Love *Prof. Janet Smith*
- 2:25 PM Afternoon Workshop Sessions & Breaks
- 5:00 PM Mass at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart *Bishop John D’Arcy*
- 7:00 PM Banquet & Talk by Prof. Smith: Seeking Holiness in Marriage & Family Life

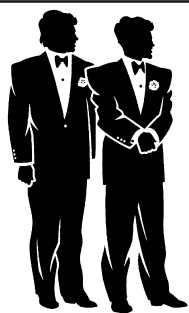


For the full schedule and to register online, go to cce.nd.edu/attend.shtml. You may also register by mail or FAX. The registration fee of \$35 per person for the day conference includes conference materials, continental breakfast, a boxed lunch and afternoon snacks. The evening banquet is an additional \$25 per person. College or graduate students are welcome to attend any of the plenary or workshop sessions at no cost. For more information, you may call the center at (574) 631-6691 or the Office of Family Life at (574) 234-0687.





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FAQ

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

used to avoid pregnancy, NFP can have an effectiveness rates of 98-99 percent.

FAQ: Are engaged couples required to take natural family planning classes?

Office of Family Life: Those marrying in our diocese are required to attend a day-long Conference for Engaged Couples, which includes an overview of natural family planning. While it is not required, engaged couples are encouraged to take a complete natural family planning class

series, which is available in either English or Spanish. For more information, contact the Office of Family Life (haustgen@fw.diocesefwsb.org), or visit www.diocesefwsb.org/diocesan-offices/family-life-office/family-planning/.

FAQ: Are there videos or diocesan training on these issues?

Office of Family Life: The diocesan Office of Family Life has just produced a DVD called "Beginning and End of Life Issues: Seeking Divine Wisdom and a booklet called Faith and Fertility: What the Church Teaches and Why," which presents the Church's teaching on responsible parenthood, contraception and infertility. Both are available

through the Cathedral Bookstore in Fort Wayne, (260) 422-4611. Natural family planning classes are available throughout the diocese. See the diocesan Web site at www.diocesefwsb.org/FAMILY for the complete schedule of diocesan classes. The Couple to Couple League (go to www.ccli.org/learn for a list of local teachers) and Creighton Model Services (ctschoortgen1980@hotmail.com) also offer natural family planning classes in the Fort Wayne area, while the Natural Family Planning Program of St. Joseph County (nfp-stjoseph@catholic.org) offers classes in the South Bend area.



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"Your Catholic Connection to Cakes & Confection"

Marriage licensing rules and regulations

BY KAY COZAD

Preparation for marriage requires an intimate look at spiritual and relational desires as well as the logistics of the wedding itself. Engagement classes may assist with relational questions and a wedding planner is the perfect source for the details of that special day. And one small detail that must not be overlooked is legalizing the marriage with a license.

Here are some important facts about applying for a marriage license in Indiana.

• **Apply for a marriage license in the county of residence at the county clerk's office or if from out-of-state, apply in the county in which the wedding will take place. The county clerk's office is usually located in the county probate or circuit court.**

• **A valid driver's license or picture identification card showing current address and date of birth is required.**

• **Some counties may require a certified copy of a birth certificate if applicant is under 30.**

• **The cost is \$18 for in-state residents and \$60 for out-of-state residents. IMPORTANT: Credit and debit cards are NOT accepted.**

• **Applicant must be 18 years or older to apply without parental consent. Under 18 must have a parent or legal guardian present and a birth certificate may be required. Under 16 requires a court order.**

• **License is valid for 60 days with no waiting period to marry after issued.**

• **License is valid state-wide.**

• **Widowed or divorced applicants must provide dates of death or divorce. Some counties require copies of death certificate or divorce decree.**

Other little known marriage licensing facts in the state of Indiana include: cousins may marry if both applicants are over 65 years old, and proxy, common law and same-sex marriages are forbidden.

A spokesperson from the Allen County Recorder's Office encourages couples to apply for the license together within a month of the wedding date to ensure the license does not expire before the wedding date. And finally, the officiating clergyman must sign the marriage license on the wedding day prior to sending it to the proper government agency for validation.

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Natural Family Planning: Separating myth from fact

BY LISA EVERETT

We all know how difficult it is to separate myth from fact about many issues, and natural family planning is no different. Here are the five most common myths about NFP and the scientific research which disproves them:

Myth No. 1: NFP is not as effective as contraception in avoiding pregnancy.

Fact: When used correctly, natural family planning is as effective as oral contraceptives in preventing pregnancy.

Researchers have confirmed that the sympto-thermal method (STM) of natural family planning is as effective as the contraceptive pill for avoiding unplanned pregnancies if used correctly, according to a 2007 report published online in Europe's leading reproductive medicine journal *Human Reproduction*. The sympto-thermal method (STM) is a form of natural family planning (NFP) that enables couples to identify accurately the time of the woman's fertile phase by interpreting changes in cervical mucus and basal body temperature. In the largest prospective study of STM, the researchers found that if the couples abstained from sex during the fertile period, the rate of unplanned pregnancies per year was 0.4 percent. The lead author of the report, Petra Frank-Herrmann, assistant professor and managing director of the natural fertility section in the Department of Gynaecological Endocrinology at the University of Heidelberg, Germany, said: "For a contraceptive method to be rated as highly efficient as the hormonal pill, there should be less than one pregnancy per 100 women per year when the method is used correctly. The pregnancy rate for women who used the STM method correctly in our study was 0.4 percent, which can be interpreted as one pregnancy occurring per 250 women per year. Therefore, we maintain that the effectiveness of STM is comparable to the effectiveness of modern contraceptive methods such as oral contraceptives, and is an effective and acceptable method of family planning." — Source: European Society for Human Reproduction and Embryology (2007, Feb. 21). Natural Family Planning Method

2010 diocesan NFP class schedule

South Bend area

Christ the King — 7-9 p.m., March 10, March 24 and May 5, Oct. 20, Nov. 3 and Dec. 15

St. Pius X, Granger — 7-9 p.m., June 8, June 22 and July 27

St. Bavo, Mishawaka — 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., April 10, April 24 and May 29

Fort Wayne area

St. Jude — 7-9: p.m., May 13, June 24 and July 15; Sept. 16, Oct. 14 and Nov. 11

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton — 7-9 p.m., March 2, March 16 and April 27

St. Charles — 7-9 p.m., (Hession Center, room number to be determined) Oct. 12, Oct. 26 and Dec. 7

St. Paul of the Cross, Columbia City — 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., Feb. 13, Feb. 27 and April 10; Oct. 9, Oct. 23 and Dec. 4

As Effective As Contraceptive Pill, New Research Finds. Available at <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/02/070221065200.htm>.

Myth No. 2: Couples who use NFP have sexual relations less frequently than do couples who use contraception.

Fact: Couples who use NFP have sex as often as couples who use contraception — they just time it differently.

A 2005 study conducted by the Georgetown University Institute for Reproductive Health found that "couples using natural family planning have intercourse just as frequently as couples using other methods," noted Institute for Reproductive Health Director Victoria Jennings, Ph.D. Jennings is an anthropologist who studies health behavior and culture change and is a professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Georgetown University Medical Center. Use of fertility-based awareness methods strongly influences the timing of sexual activity, reported study authors Irit Sinai, Ph.D., and Marcos Arevalo, M.D., both assistant professors of obstetrics and gynecology. They found that couples who use fertility awareness-based methods of family planning to prevent pregnancy engage in more frequent sexual relations before and after the fertile time. Frequency of intercourse over the course of the women's cycle is comparable to that of couples using other methods of family planning. "It's important that the healthcare community let women know that these methods are available, growing in popularity, and

that users continue to be satisfied with them. If couples using fertility-awareness based family planning methods were having less sex, this would probably not be the case," said Dr. Arevalo, the Institute's director of biomedical research. — Source: Georgetown University Medical Center (2005, October 12). It's All In The Timing. ScienceDaily. Available at <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2005/10/051012084603.htm>.

Myth No. 3: NFP can only be used by women with regular cycles.

Fact: NFP can be used by women with irregular cycles, and can even help detect, diagnose and treat gynecological problems, including infertility.

It is important to realize that the "rhythm" or calendar method relied on previous menstrual cycles to predict ovulation, which in practice often proved inaccurate, even for women with regular menstrual cycles, let alone for women whose cycles are not regular. In contrast, modern methods of NFP are based on a day-by-day observation and interpretation of the biomarkers of fertility and infertility in a woman's body, regardless of whether her cycle is regular. This knowledge enables a couple to identify on a daily basis whether or not conception is possible on that particular day. Besides equipping a couple either to achieve or to avoid a pregnancy, this knowledge enables a woman to monitor her gynecological health and identify any abnormalities. The Creighton Model FertilityCare System (CrMS) is a natural family

planning system that is particularly designed to detect and diagnose abnormalities in the menstrual cycle. By applying the new women's health science of NaProTECHNOLOGY, the CrMS is able to effectively treat and in many cases, correct, conditions such as irregular or abnormal bleeding, ovarian cysts, polycystic ovary syndrome, PMS, infertility, repeat miscarriages, premature delivery and post-partum depression. NaProTECHNOLOGY is nearly three times more successful than IVF in assisting infertile couples to conceive, and is completely in accord with Catholic moral principles.

Myth No. 4: NFP is complicated and difficult to use.

Fact: Illiterate couples in the Third World use NFP successfully.

In 1976, the World Health Organization conducted a prospective study of the ovulation method of NFP in five different countries. The purpose of the study was to determine the proportion of women who are capable of recognizing the changes in cervical mucus during the menstrual cycle as well as the use-effectiveness of the method in fertility control. In Bangalore, India, couples were drawn from both urban and rural areas and were mostly illiterate or semiliterate. None of the women had used the ovulation method before. In the cycle following instruction, understanding of the method was evaluated as "excellent or good" in 96.6 percent of the cases; in the second and third cycles, the figure rose to 97 percent with regard to interpretable mucus pattern. The method-failure rate was 0 in Bangalore while the user-effectiveness of the method in Bangalore was 96 percent in over 7,514 cycles of observation. The World Health Organization recommended that the ovulation method be used in India. — Source citation: Bangalore, India, WHO, [1980]. 5 p.

Myth No. 5: When used to avoid pregnancy, NFP is really no different morally than contraception.

Fact: NFP and contraception involve two irreconcilable concepts of the human person and human sexuality.

Pope John Paul II developed his beautiful "theology of the body" largely as a way to explain the profound difference between contraception and natural family planning. "(It) is a difference which is much wider and deeper than is

usually thought," he reflected, "one which involves in the final analysis two irreconcilable concepts of the human person and of human sexuality." — "Familiaris consortio," 32. According to the Church's view, sexual union is intended by God to be the most intimate sign of the complete gift of self that a man and woman make to one another in marriage. This act which expresses their complete gift of self to one another at the same time makes them capable of the greatest possible gift — cooperating with God in giving life to a new human person, who is literally the two of them "in one flesh." Inscribed in this sacred act, therefore, is an inseparable connection between its love-giving purpose and its life-giving potential, between communion with one another as spouses and communion with God as the Lord and Giver of life. The Church teaches about these two dimensions of sex what Christ himself taught about the bond between husband and wife: we must not separate what God has joined. This means that married couples must respect the integrity of the act of intercourse whenever they choose to engage in it: "each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life." — "Humanae vitae," No. 11.

Natural family planning respects the sacredness of sex as God designed it since the method does nothing to suppress the life-giving potential of sexual union. Couples simply refrain from sexual relations during the fertile time if they are not prepared to accept the life-giving potential of that act. In contrast, contraception separates what God has joined. It not only implies a positive refusal to be open to the possibility of new life coming from a particular act of intercourse, but it also contradicts the meaning of sex as a sign of total self-giving. I am not giving myself totally to my spouse in sexual union if, at the same time, I am withholding from him or her my fertility, a gift which has the potential to unite us in the most profound way possible, and through which we are privileged to participate in the love of God, the Lord and Giver of life.

To locate an NFP class near you, contact the diocesan Office of Family Life at (574) 234-0687.

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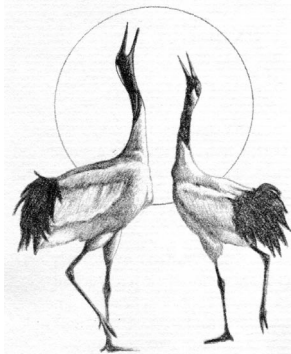
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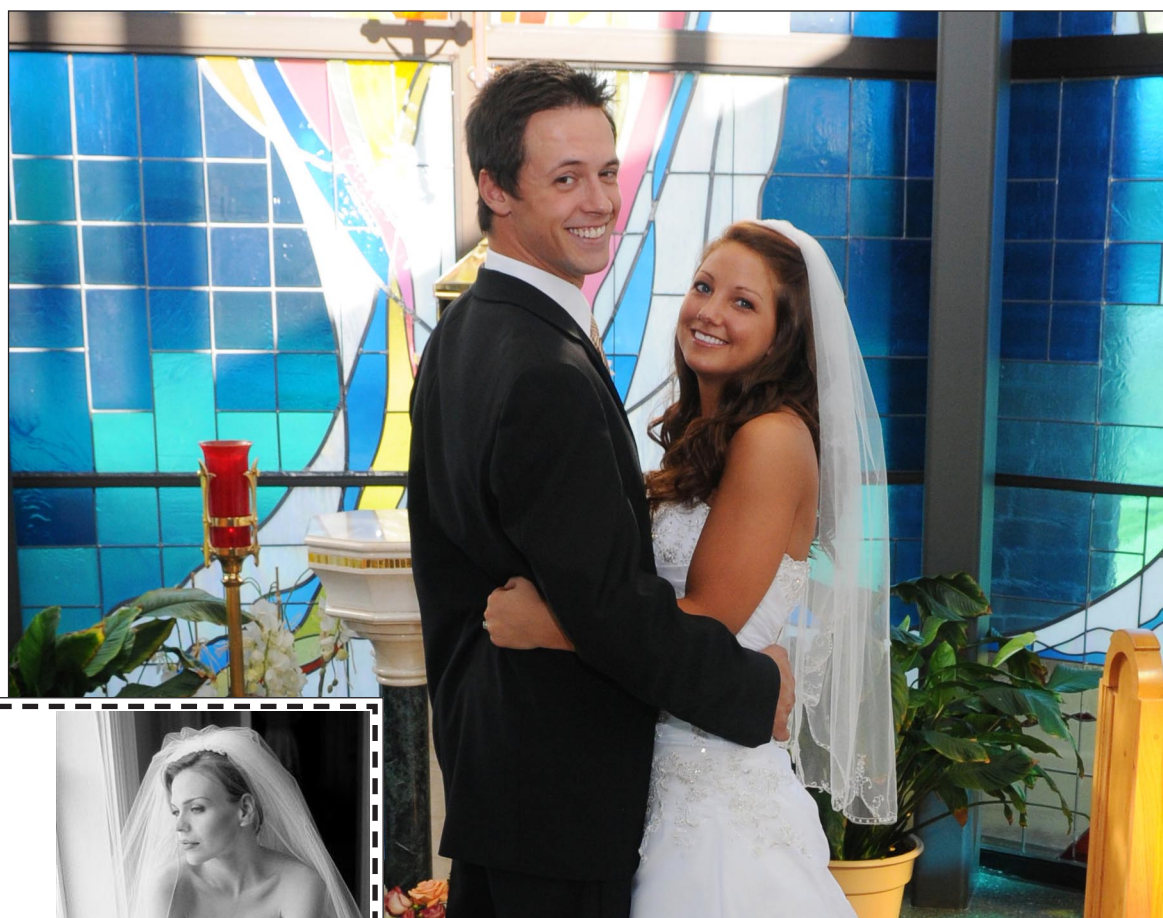
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WASHINGTON, D.C. — This Valentine's Day, skip the candy and flowers. Better yet, this year give your spouse or significant other a little something extra. Log on to www.foryourmarriage.org for tips and tools to deal with common issues faced by married and engaged couples and those in serious relationships.

Marrying a Catholic but unsure what this means to you as a non-Catholic? Read what the Catholic Church teaches about marriage, sexuality and spirituality. Married for years but still trying to get him to open up more? The Monthly Quiz will prompt a lively discussion between the two of you. Wrestling with life issues such as finances, careers or addictions? Learn to deal with these and other potential problems before they escalate. Sign up for an RSS feed of the Daily Marriage Tip. If you're looking for resources, the Web site offers direct links to diocesan marriage and family life offices.

The United States Conference

of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) introduced the Web site in June, 2007 as part of the National Pastoral Initiative for Marriage, a broad-based effort to promote the meaning and value of marriage for the Church and society. So far, the Web site has attracted more than 107,000 visits. Web site visitors can also view radio and television spots that feature sidewalk interviews with individuals who answer the question "What have you done for your marriage today?"

Sheila Garcia, associate director of the USCCB's Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth, explained the importance of the Marriage Initiative and the Web site.

"Many people, especially younger adults, wonder if a life-long marriage is possible. We believe the Church has something to say about marriage and we wanted to get the message out there. Our Web site offers practical support for couples and reassures them that they're not on

their own."

Heidi Peckham, head of the pastoral ministries for the Diocese of Orlando, praised the Web site for its "little insights" such as reminders to kiss your spouse in the morning or have lunch together.

What have you done for your marriage today, asks Catholic Church

WASHINGTON, D.C. — That's the question the Catholic Church asks in a series of TV and radio spots launched June 27, 2007, by the U.S. bishops' Committees on Marriage and Family Life and Communications.

The answers, which come from people interviewed on the street, range from getting up early with the baby to carrying a spouse's purse. They show that short-term kindnesses cement a lifelong relationship. With humorous bits of life, the spots prompt people to think of and do

more for their own commitments.

The couples featured were filmed in parks and other public sites in Washington, New York, Los Angeles, Austin, Texas and Providence, R.I. They include young and old and a rich variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Together the couples offer insights into marriage.

The spots can be viewed on www.foryourmarriage.org, the marriage campaign Web site. The site also offers other resources to help couples build strong marriages.

"Healthy marriages are the bedrock of our Church and our society," said Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Ky., chairman of the bishops' Marriage and Family Life Committee, announcing the campaign. "The Church seeks to do all it can to encourage what goes into a solid marriage: prayer, fidelity, commitment and the little things that count."

The campaign is part of a multi-year National Pastoral Initiative for Marriage of the U.S. Catholic

bishops to convey the meaning and value of married life for the Church and for society. The initiative will develop guidance and resources, including a pastoral letter, to promote, strengthen, sustain and restore marriages.

The bishops approved the effort at the November 2004 meeting of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Phase one (2005-2007) included research and consultation. Phase two (2007-2008) included the spot campaign and the writing of a pastoral letter. Phase three (2008-2011) includes implementation, development of pastoral resources and evaluation.

The bishops launched the campaign at the annual meeting of the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers in Denver.

The TV and radio spots are funded by the U.S. bishops' Catholic Communication Campaign, which collects money in parishes nationwide to support church media efforts.



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