

TODAY'S CATHOLIC

WEDDING

FAQ

FREQUENTLY
ASKED QUESTIONS

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An interview with Bishop Kevin Rhoades, new chair on Marriage, Family Life and Youth

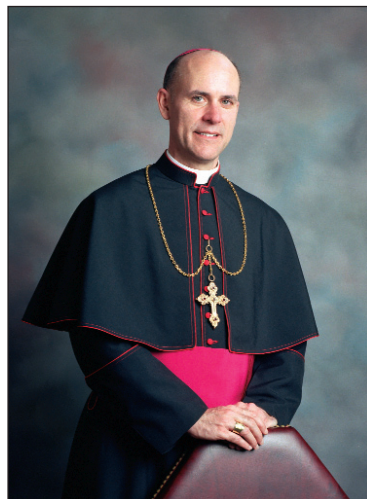
BY FRED EVERETT

Today's Catholic: As the new chairman of the USCCB Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth, could you tell me about the work of the committee itself and your responsibilities as its new chair?

Bishop Rhoades: The Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth assists the bishops in the following areas of responsibility: laity in the world and in the Church; lay ecclesial ministry; youth and young adults; marriage and family life, including natural family planning. We provide national leadership in communicating and applying Church teaching in those various areas. This includes providing resources for dioceses in areas like marriage and

family ministries, natural family planning, lay ecclesial ministry, youth ministry and young adult ministry. We promote evangelization and catechesis in these various areas, for example, the preparation of last year's pastoral letter of the U.S. bishops on marriage with accompanying resources. As chair of the committee, I lead our meetings. Between meetings, I work closely with the Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth (which serves the committee). I also report on the committee's work to the administrative committee of the USCCB, of which I am a member.

Today's Catholic: With regard to efforts to strengthen marriage in our society, do you think that the Church faces a significant chal-



BISHOP KEVIN C. RHOADES:

lenge in explaining the meaning of marriage especially in the face of efforts to establish so-called "same-sex marriages?"

Bishop Rhoades: The Church faces a significant challenge in explaining the meaning of marriage, especially in the face of efforts to establish so-called same-sex marriages. The Church's teaching on this matter is clear, yet we face a great challenge in presenting this teaching in a convincing way in our culture and society. The USCCB recently decided that the defense of marriage should now come under our committee. Previously, the USCCB had an ad hoc committee for the defense of marriage. In June, I expect that this ad hoc committee will become a

subcommittee of our committee. This should unite our efforts since the defense of marriage is intimately linked to our committee's work to strengthen marriage.

Today's Catholic: More broadly speaking, this November will mark the 30th anniversary of Pope John Paul II's "magna carta" on the Christian family, "Familiaris Consortio." Why does the Church put such an emphasis on teachings regarding the Christian family?

Bishop Rhoades: The Church places great emphasis on teachings regarding the family because the family is the bedrock of society. The Church considers marriage and the family to be, as Pope John Paul called it, "one of the most precious of human values." There are many currents in today's society that are detrimental to marriage and the family, so we are called to proclaim the plan of God for marriage and the family, something so important for the good of society. Our culture needs renewal in this area. The new evangelization includes the proclamation of the plan of God for marriage and the family. We also need concrete actions to support marriage and family life. As Pope John Paul II wrote in "Familiaris Consortio," "the future of humanity passes by way of the family."

Today's Catholic: With World Youth Day coming up this summer, in what activities for youth

will you and your committee be involved this year?

Bishop Rhoades: In the area of youth, our committee is very much focused on the preparations for our U.S. participation in World Youth Day this coming August in Madrid. We are organizing and coordinating the U.S. participation. We are involved in the practical aspects of planning, but also the spiritual and catechetical preparation of our youth who will be going to WYD, providing resources for participants.

Today's Catholic: Looking to the future, are there any new initiatives that you are considering as chairman in the next three years?

Bishop Rhoades: The first meeting of our newly constituted committee will be held in March, so it is a bit too early to speak of new initiatives. We have also just appointed consultants to the committee. We already have a lot of ongoing projects (e.g. organizing U.S. participation in WYD). I expect that with the incorporation of the defense of marriage within our committee mandate (with the new subcommittee), and given the urgency of the issue, that it will be one of our major focuses.

Fred Everett is the co-director of the Office of Family Life for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.



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A primer on what marriage is

Authors offer well reasoned arguments in defense of marriage

BY FRED EVERETT

While the Church has a number of countercultural positions on various issues of our day, perhaps one of the more difficult to address is that of so-called same-sex marriage. Unlike, for example, the teaching on the sanctity of human life from the moment of conception, the threats posed by same-sex marriage are not as obvious nor as simple to articulate.

So while human embryology clearly identifies the fusion of the pronuclei in a fertilized egg as the beginning of a new and unique human being at the zygote stage, there is seemingly no scientific fact upon which to premise the Church's opposition to same-sex marriage. In addition, while abortion has an obvious victim (as well as the less obvious victims of the mother herself, the father and other family and friends) those who seek same-sex marriage seem themselves to be the victims of a biological condition that does not allow them to marry someone of the opposite sex.

Christians, who know that such behavior is wrongful and condemned in Scripture, often do not know how it is that they should argue against proposals for same-sex marriage in a way that is both persuasive and charitable. Young Christians, in particular, without clear guidance and understanding, are especially vulnerable to seeing same-sex marriage as a compassionate response to those who deal with homosexuality. In fact, while surveys indicate that young Christians tend to be strongly pro-life, they are not nearly as strong in their convictions regarding sexuality and marriage.

What is marriage?

Into this debate have now come Princeton professor, Robert George, and two PhD candidates, who published an article in the *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy* this past December.

Titled, "What is Marriage?" the three authors offer clear and well-reasoned arguments to the most commonly articulated defenses of same-sex marriage.

The authors begin with a simple question as to the nature of marriage. What is it? Does it encompass the sexual grouping of two or more people of any gender? Does it require a certain intentionality regarding permanence or sexual exclusivity? Is it even something that could be expanded to include non-humans? The question is: what is marriage as a particular kind of relationship that merits the attention and regulation of the law?

For example, if two people meet and become friends, the law does not recognize this relationship nor does it try to regulate it — even if these two people, regardless of gender, become sexually intimate. There is something special and important about marriage that makes it of interest to the law. The answer to the question of what is marriage, then, will be the key to answering whether same-sex marriage should be legally recognized, or whether, in fact, it can even exist.

To tackle this question, the authors first offer a brief sketch of the two competing views regarding the nature of marriage:

"Conjugal View: Marriage is the union of a man and a woman who make a permanent and exclusive commitment to each other of the type that is naturally (inherently) fulfilled by bearing and rearing children together. The spouses seal (consummate) and renew their union by conjugal acts — acts that constitute the behavioral part of the process of reproduction, thus uniting them as a reproductive unit. Marriage is valuable in itself, but its inherent orientation to the bearing and rearing of children contributes to its distinctive structure, including norms of monogamy and fidelity. This link to the welfare of children also helps explain why marriage is important to the common good and why the state should recognize and regulate it.

"Revisionist View: Marriage is

the union of two people (whether of the same sex or of opposite sexes) who commit to romantically loving and caring for each other and to sharing the burdens and benefits of domestic life. It is essentially a union of hearts and minds, enhanced by whatever forms of sexual intimacy both partners find agreeable. The state should recognize and regulate marriage because it has an interest in stable romantic partnerships and in the concrete needs of spouses and any children they may choose to rear."

In describing the conjugal view, which would be the traditional one, the authors make mention of the idea of consummation. This idea, in fact, is as old as marriage itself as an institution. Theologically and even legally, a marriage is understood to be consummated, or brought to completion, when a husband and wife first engage in an act that establishes their organic unity. In other words, not just any sexual activity will do. The husband and wife must join parts that fit together and make a biological reproductive whole. This is, then, the bedrock, as it were, of marriage.

This is why the authors argue that marriage is impossible outside of a heterosexual context: no consummation is even possible. Two men or two women are simply incapable of performing acts that naturally lead to forming an organic, reproductive whole. Interestingly, this consummation is analogous to the fusion of the pronuclei of the sperm and egg — without this fusion there is no human being and without consummation there is no indissoluble marriage. Marriage in the law, then, can simply be thought of as the legal recognition of a comprehensive union of a man and a woman that is expressed through conjugal acts which naturally lead to children.

What is the harm of same-sex marriage?

Even in the face of this well-established understanding of marriage, many revisionists would

ask what harm there is in creating a legal fiction so as to encompass the emotional needs of those drawn to same-sex marriage. "How would gay marriage affect you or your marriage?" To this argument, the authors again have clear responses. First, the authors notice that revisionists are inconsistent in their reasoning when they regularly deny that same-sex marriage will lead to polygamy and even oppose that it should. Why should Ted, Ned and Ed be barred from entering a polyamorous union together? In other words, now that consummation through conjugal acts is off the table, why only keep it at two? To turn their question on them: "How would a married threesome affect you or your marriage?"

While it is true that a particular marriage may not be affected by the legalization of same-sex marriage, the future stability of the institution certainly will be. Since the revisionist view focuses on emotional and sexual intimacy and fulfillment, there is no reasonable argument under that view as to why three or more partners of any gender should not be legally recognized as a marriage. In addition, by redefining marriage in this way, is there any reason that such marriages should include the element of permanence in the event that one or more of the partners ceases to be emotionally or sexually fulfilled?

Since the law also functions as a teacher, how would a revisionist view strengthen marriage as a complete gift of self expressed through a conjugal union that is both faithful and open to life? In addition, numerous studies have shown how children benefit from having both a father and a mother in the home. If same-sex mar-

riages were to be legalized, would this not also eventually minimize the importance of marriage as a unique institution with the specific purpose of welcoming and educating children by both mother and father? Would this not contravene the main purpose of the law in promoting the stability and welfare of the nuclear family?

Then, there is the argument of religious freedom. If marriages between two or more people of any gender were to become commonly accepted, would not churches that refused to bless such unions eventually be accused of wrongful discrimination as bad as that of racism? Christian churches that would refuse to abandon their principles would likely find themselves increasingly marginalized and persecuted by society.

Finally, when all is said and done, if the meaning of marriage became so weakened as to have lost any sense of a permanent and exclusive gift of self that is the foundation for raising children, what interest would the state even have in promoting or regulating such relationships? What interest would people even have in entering them? Conversely, consider this though experiment offered by the authors. If people reproduced asexually without any need for another human being in bearing or raising children, isn't almost certainly the case that marriage as an institution would never have come into existence in the first place? What, indeed, would have been the point?

Fred Everett is the co-director of the Office of Family Life for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

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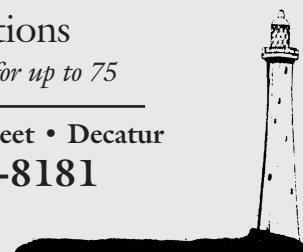


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FAQ

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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.

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 Holy 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.

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 must reflect this fact. Secular music does not belong before, during, or after the rite within the sacred place of the church. Favorite secular or popular songs belong at the reception or at another time during the wedding festivities that is not associated with the liturgy itself.

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.

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

Office of Worship: A nuptial Mass

is obviously the ideal, though 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 Holy 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.

My fiancé is not Catholic and wants to marry in the Church? 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.

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 a non-Catholic Christian. However, if the Marriage rites are taking place outside Mass, then there would not be any problem with a baptized non-Catholic doing the readings.

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 proclaim a Scripture reading or serve as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion (during a Mass).

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.

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 priests and deacons 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 be the appropriate location for more whimsical and creative decoration.

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.

Could a pastor from my youth celebrate the Marriage rite?

Office of Worship: Some parishes may allow outside priests to officiate. However, couples should speak to the parish 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.

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.

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.

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

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/.

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 website 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 (ctschartgen1980@hotmail.com) also offer natural family planning classes in the Fort Wayne area, while the Natural Family Planning Program of St. Joseph County (nfpstjoseph@catholic.org) offers classes in the South Bend area.



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Spiritual intimacy: Praying together as spouses

BY LISA EVERETT

An arch is one of the most beautiful and functional architectural features ever invented, described once by Leonardo da Vinci as “two weaknesses, which, when leaning upon each other, become a strength.” But if you think about how an arch is actually constructed, each half leans, not directly upon the other, but upon the capstone, which literally holds the whole structure in place. This is a very good analogy for the vocation of marriage, in which an individual man and woman, each with their own weaknesses, are joined together through God Himself to become a beautiful and sturdy structure which serves as the foundation of the family.

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us: “Without His help, man and woman cannot achieve the union of their lives for which God created them ‘in the beginning.’” As a married couple, we can deepen our awareness of God’s dwelling among us and lean on Him more consciously by learning to pray together as husband and wife.

Pope John Paul II wrote that communion in prayer is both a consequence of and a requirement for the communion bestowed by the Sacrament of Matrimony. Like the two disciples along the road to Emmaus, a Christian husband and wife who invite Christ to stay and walk with them, day by day, will experience His presence in marvelous ways. They will discover that as they draw closer to Christ, He will deepen their love for one another. Perhaps this is why studies have shown that couples who



make shared prayer a regular part of their life together have stronger marriages than those who simply attend church services together.

Now, if you are like many husbands and wives, the thought of praying together, just the two of you, makes you somewhat uncomfortable. Perhaps you have even given it a try and it seemed awkward or strained. Here are some suggestions drawn from the experience of married couples that you might find helpful.

Begin with a few moments of silence together to become attentive to the presence of God. Simply holding hands and slowly praying aloud the “Our Father” is a good way to get started. Doing this reminds us that besides being spouses, we are, above all, brother and sister in Christ, children of the same Father, in whose house we hope to spend eternity together. Is there any goal more important in our marriage?

One wonderful resource that can help couples to pray together on a regular basis is *Magnificat*, a monthly missalette-sized magazine. For each day of the month, it contains morning and evening prayer, the readings for the Mass of the day, a reflection from a saint or spiritual writer and much more.

Try praying morning or evening prayer together as a couple, or perhaps read aloud the Gospel of the day and spend a few minutes meditating on it, asking the Lord to show you what it means for your life and sharing with each other any insights you receive. You can order a subscription by calling (866) 273-5215 or through their website at www.magnificat.com. Some religious bookstores in the diocese also sell current issues of *Magnificat*, and some pastors order bulk subscriptions and make them available to parishioners.

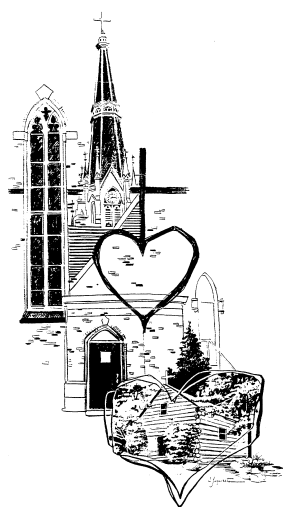
Another practice to consider is praying the Divine Mercy chaplet or a decade of the rosary aloud for a particular intention. Don’t feel that you have to confine yourselves to the traditional mysteries, but try picking an event or an encounter in the life of Christ that seems most relevant to what is on your minds and hearts.

Parents praying together are powerful intercessors for their children, and we should confide to Christ all of our dreams and difficulties in trying to raise them as His sons and daughters: “Pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord; Lift up your hands to Him for the lives of your little ones,” — Lam. 2:19.

Sometimes we will hear the Lord speaking in our hearts in a subtle inspiration or sudden insight. Sometimes something our spouse will say will strike us as a message from the Lord. Sometimes we will share with Christ a problem we are having or a decision we need to make and ask Him to give us guidance through the Scriptures. And when we open the Bible and begin to read, we will be amazed by how a particular passage speaks to us.

Whichever form of prayer appeals to you as a couple, give it a go and persevere. You won’t regret this simple investment in your relationship with Christ and with each other that will reap incredible dividends in this world and the next.

Lisa Everett is the co-director of the Office of Family Life for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.



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Catholic wedding must mean couple knows Church teaching, pope says

BY CINDY WOODEN

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Men and women have a natural right to marry, but that does not mean they have a right to a Catholic wedding, Pope Benedict XVI said.

For the Catholic Church, Marriage is a sacrament that is witnessed by a priest or deacon, but performed by the couple who pledge their union will be forever and that they will be open to having and educating children, the pope said.

“The right to contract Marriage presupposes that one is able to and intends to truly celebrate it, that is, in the truth of its essence as taught by the Church,” Pope Benedict said Jan. 22 when he met with members of the Roman Rota, a Vatican-based tribunal that deals mainly with marriage cases.

Because the Church has a very specific religious understanding of what marriage is, “no one can claim the right to a marriage ceremony” in the Church, the pope said.

In his annual meeting with the tribunal officials, Pope Benedict said he wanted to focus on the legal or juridical aspect of Catholic Marriage preparation programs, because too often engaged couples — and even those preparing them for marriage — consider the courses simply a bureaucratic hurdle to overcome before the wedding.



CNS PHOTO/L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO VIA REUTERS


Pope Benedict XVI gestures during a meeting with Roman Rota members at the Vatican Jan. 22. The Roman Rota is a Vatican-based tribunal that deals mainly with marriage cases.

“In fact, often it is assumed that the priest must act with largesse, since the natural right of persons to marry is at stake,” the pope said, but for the Catholic Church, there exists only one kind of Marriage — sacramental — and the right of Catholic couples to celebrate the sacrament can be exercised only if they fully understand what they are doing.

Pope Benedict said anyone involved in Marriage preparation programs, but especially the priest or other pastoral worker conducting the obligatory pre-marriage interviews with the potential bride and potential groom, has an obligation to

ensure there is nothing standing in the way of a valid and licit celebration of the sacrament. For the Marriage to be valid, the couple must understand the commitment being undertaken, he said.

Pastoral workers and marriage tribunal officials together “must work to interrupt to the extent possible the vicious cycle frequently noted of too easily allowing couples to marry without adequate preparation” and “the sometimes equally easy judicial declaration” that a marriage is invalid, the pope said. Both approaches give people a sense that the Catholic Church no longer sees marriage as truly being binding forever, he said.



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'For Your Marriage' website offers resources for all couples

WASHINGTON — Putting a modern image on traditional values, the U.S. Catholic bishops launched a website in 2007 designed to promote healthy marriages. The website which is located on the Internet at www.foryourmarriage.org, can aid couples of all faiths. With everything from daily marriage tips to statistics on divorce and cohabitation, this site is an up-to-date resource.

The "For Your Marriage" website includes resources for everyone, including engaged and married couples, and facts about Catholic marriage. The website is designed for a wide and varied audience and is part of larger campaign which includes television public service messages which can be viewed on the site.

The site offers daily marriage tips that suggest simple ways to cultivate a healthy marriage. A link on the home page also gives couples a tool to find Catholic Marriage information locally. A

monthly marriage quiz can serve as a conversation starter on sensitive issues.

Information on conflict resolution, communication and financial concerns is posted throughout the website.

Topics such as intimacy and parenting also are featured. Visitors also can view stories and advice for married couples.

"The Internet has become a crucial means for evangelizing, especially among younger people," said Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, who was chairman of the bishops' Marriage and Family Life Committee in 2007. "We hope youth especially will find inspiration and hope at the stroke

of a key."

The contemporary design of the "For Your Marriage" website has versatility and accessibility to enable the Internet to be a medium for evangelization and education.

The "For Your Marriage" website is part of a multi-year National Pastoral Initiative for Marriage. The simple exhortation to do something for your marriage is the practical advice promoted by the website and the entire campaign.

The "For Your Marriage" website, and 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.

Do something special this valentine's day

WASHINGTON — This Valentine's Day, skip the candy and flowers and 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 website offers direct links to diocesan marriage

and family life offices.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) introduced the website in June, 2007 as part of the broad-based effort to promote the meaning and value of marriage for the Church and society.

Website visitors can view radio and television spots that feature sidewalk interviews with individuals who answer the question "What Have You Done For Your Marriage Today?"

"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 website offers practical support for couples and reassures them that they're not on their own," said Sheila Garcia, associate secretary of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth.



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