

TODAY'S CATHOLIC

SPECIAL 2014 SUPPLEMENT ON WEDDINGS



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A Catholic wedding checklist

BY KAY COZAD

You're engaged and it's time to map out a plan for what will be the start of a new life of marital love for you and your spouse. To create a meaningful Catholic wedding it is important to remember that the celebration of marriage is not just a ceremony, but a sacrament. The elements of the ceremony you choose will speak to those in attendance of your values and hopes for your marriage.

The informative website, www.foryourmarriage.org, offered by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), presents a plethora of information on Church teachings concerning the sacrament of Marriage and all that it entails.

It states, "In the Catholic Church, Marriage is a sacrament. All sacraments are to be celebrated because they are encounters with Jesus Christ. A wedding celebrates Christ's gift of marital love to this particular man and woman. It is a time for rejoicing."

The following are general guidelines for planning a memorable Catholic wedding compiled from information found at www.foryourmarriage.org, www.theknot.com and www.ehow.com.

Twelve months prior to the wedding

- Select a church. Some parishes require one member of the couple to be a registered member.
- Meet with the pastor or deacon to select a wedding date and time, and discuss the parish requirements for a wedding celebration. Many parishes have wardrobe restrictions, including requiring the bride to cover her shoulders during the wedding.
- Choose one of three Rites of Marriage to celebrate: Wedding



celebration within a Mass for two Catholics; celebration without Mass, structured around the Liturgy of the Word when a Catholic marries a baptized Christian; and celebration without Mass when a Catholic marries a non-Christian.

Nine months prior to the wedding

- Select readings (traditionally, one from the Old Testament, one from the New Testament and one from the Gospels) and Prayers of the Faithful from the approved texts.

A note about budgets

Developing a realistic budget for your wedding may seem a daunting task. Costs vary between regions but according to www.costofwedding.com "the majority of couples spend between \$19,242 and \$32,070 on weddings in the U.S."

From the wedding dress to the reception decorations and entertainment, wedding costs can add up quickly. But a little research and careful planning can help keep costs to a minimum.

According to the USCCB sponsored website www.foryourmarriage.org, the U.S. bishops have not specifically addressed the issue of spending, but put forth a few questions for couples to answer to keep costs in perspective. Answer the following questions to shape a personal view of what is truly important in a wedding celebration.

- What do you want the wedding to say about you and your values?
- Are you willing to go into debt, or put family members in debt, because of this wedding?
- Are you willing to focus time and energy on the details of a lavish wedding? Will this reduce the attention you can pay to preparing for the marriage itself?
- Do you feel comfortable with the amount you plan to spend? Have you considered this in relation to the needs of people in your community?

- Select family members or friends in good standing with the Church, who will be lectors, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, and those who will carry the offertory gifts if Mass will be celebrated.

- Meet with parish music director to select sacred music that will be used at the Mass or ceremony.

- Select the bridal party, who will not only be attendants but witnesses of the marriage rite as well. Traditionally, the Church prefers the maid of honor and best man to be Catholic.

- Discuss dates to attend pre-marital classes or a preparation program required by the Church and engagement retreats hosted by the diocesan Office of Family Life.

Six months prior to the wedding

- Design or select, and order, wedding invitations to be sent to guests.
- Create your guest list.

Three months prior to the wedding

- Meet with the parish wedding representative or pastor to discuss decoration requirements, which may include placement and size of floral arrangements.
- Discuss seating arrangements for family members.

Two months prior to the wedding

- Finalize the invitations, ceremony details and vows.
- Publish a wedding announcement in the local newspaper and the church bulletin.
- Book a location for the rehearsal dinner.
- Prepare and mail wedding invitations.

Three-four weeks prior to the wedding

- Meet with the parish priest or deacon to discuss last minute details.
- Send rehearsal dinner invitations, if appropriate.

One to two weeks before the wedding

- Touch base with your priest.

Day before the wedding

- Participate, with priest and wedding party, in a rehearsal ceremony.
- Pray!

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Navigating the ‘newly married’ years

BY LISA EVERETT

The first few years of marriage are filled with opportunities and challenges that can set the stage for many years to come. As with any adventure, there are many thrills and joys, but there are also perils and pitfalls to navigate. This is evidenced by the fact that sadly, most divorces in our country occur for couples married less than five years. Get your marriage off on the right foot by following these six steps:

1. Learn your spouse’s “love languages”

One of the most helpful books for newly married couples is “The Five Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts.” Based on his decades of experience counseling couples, author Gary Chapman proposes that there are five basic “love languages” through which people generally experience and express love: 1) words of affirmation; 2) acts of service; 3) receiving gifts; 4) quality time; and 5) physical touch. Most people, he has found, have a primary “love language” as well as a secondary one, and it is important for couples to know the dominant ways in which their spouse experiences and expresses love. You can go to the website www.5lovelanguages.com and each take a 10-15 minute profile to assess your own love language and share the results with one another. Thinking about the answers to the following questions can also give you a pretty good idea of your spouse’s primary love language: How does he/she most often express love to others? What does he/she complain about most often? What does he/she request most often?

2. 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.

3. Make your marriage the priority over work and other commitments

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 solid relationship takes work and it takes time. Especially in the first few years of marriage, we need to make quantities of quality time for each other. According to a national study conducted by Creighton University’s Center for Marriage and Family on the first five years of marriage, the number one problem reported by newly married couples was balancing job and family. According to director Michael Lawler, “Since dual-career marriages now represent about 60 percent of all marriages in America, this is not surprising. The difficulty of juggling jobs, couple-time together and parenting (if there are children) requires serious attention.”

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. It also means being willing to adjust schedules and to scale back on work and other commitments to make sure that we are spending enough time with each other. It may also mean curtailing time spent in front of the TV or on Facebook in order to have sufficient “face time” with our spouse. 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 work and individual pursuits.

4. Appreciate your differences and make them enrich your life together

St. Augustine once said of the moral life of Christians: “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 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.

5. Practice constructive communication and conflict resolution

It may surprise some newlyweds to know that research has shown that 93 percent of communication in marriage is non-verbal. Over half of this non-verbal 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 non-verbal 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.

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 emotional 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.” And as Pope Francis told newly married couples during a visit to Assisi this past fall: “Argue as much as you want; if the plates start flying, so be it. But never let the day end without making peace. Never!”

6. Deepen 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 want 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. 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.

Studies show that married couples that 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 that make shared prayer a regular part of their life together have even stronger marriages. For more resources and recommendations for navigating the newly married years, check out the USCCB website For Your Marriage at www.foryourmarriage.org.

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

Boy meets girl 66 years ago, Indiana style

BY DON GROOMS

I aimed my dad's '38 Chrysler between the ruts on the gravel road. "It's just over the hill," Marianne said. She was referring to her parents' farmhouse on Mulberry Road. Marianne and I had met just a week ago on a blind date and I was going to meet her mom and dad for the first time.

I was so nervous when I pulled into their driveway I almost hit a tree. I couldn't imagine that Marianne's parents were going to be too impressed with the man their daughter was bringing home to meet the family. They were practicing Catholics, and although I was baptized a Catholic, I hadn't seen the inside of a church since grade school. But I wasn't all bad I reasoned ... I did have a steady job and was never in trouble with the law.

I must have passed their first test, because they asked me to stay for supper. It was a meal only farmwives knew how to fix — a mountain of mashed potatoes, gallons of brown gravy and wall-to-wall fried chicken. But I was too on edge to enjoy the meal. From the corner of my eye I could see Marianne's brothers eyeing me and giggling. It was going to be a long night.

I was right. After supper, the whole family did a very strange thing. They all paraded into the living room and each person picked out a chair or section of sofa and knelt down. "We're going to say the rosary now," Marianne's dad announced.

If he had said that we were all going to run barefoot through the barley, I couldn't have been more surprised. I didn't know how to react. Although he said, "we are going to say the rosary," I wasn't sure if he meant me too, and I was too flustered to ask. I thought of saying that I would wait in the kitchen, but something about that didn't seem right. So I gulped a few times; picked out a chair next to Marianne and knelt down. It was the first time I had prayed in five years.

Looking back at that night, I can see in it an invitation from God to come home. I don't think anyone would have thought the less of me if I had waited in the kitchen, but something (or Someone) inside of me wouldn't let me do it. It was a moment of grace I could have refused. But God took my "yes" and changed the direction of my life. In the last book of the Bible, Jesus tells us that He stands at the door of our life and knocks. The latch is on our side.

Editor's note: On Oct. 23, 2014, Marianne and Don Grooms will celebrate their 66th wedding anniversary. They are members of St. Therese, Little Flower Parish, South Bend.



Teachings of Christ make possible a flourishing and happy society

BY FRED EVERETT

In what has become an often bitter and close-minded debate in Indiana and throughout the country about the very nature of marriage, we see playing out the final stages of a “paradigm shift” from what was once a Christian society to one that can be described as post-Christian secularist. From administration attacks on religious freedom to administration support for gay marriage to administration support for coerced funding of abortion and contraception, it would seem that a growing majority of our fellow Americans are either supportive of these policies or just shrug with indifference. We are not in Kansas anymore.

A recent article by *New York Times* columnist David Brooks drives this point home. He comments that in research on how the increasingly secular young perceive those who are devoutly faithful — whether Christian, Jew or some other faith — the words that most frequently come up in their descriptions include “judgmental,” “hypocritical,” “old-fashioned” and “out of touch.” Clearly, if this is what they believe characterizes believers, no wonder they are rejecting the Christian heritage upon which our nation was founded!

Of course, the irony is that what is being jettisoned in the name of freedom, love and happiness is in fact their greatest safeguard. The teachings of Christ on marriage and sexuality are not impediments to a flourishing and happy society; they actually liberate and deepen the love that makes it possible. Look at the daily news and ask yourself if all the stories of heartache, infidelity or betrayal are more likely the result of following the teachings of Christ or of abandoning them. Without question, it’s the latter.

Take, for example, the recent story of the cold dismissal of the First Lady of France. She and the President of France have been living together for several years and when her partner was elected as chief executive, she took over the role of First Lady. Unfortunately, her partner was also dating a younger actress on the side and when this was made public recently, the First Lady was curtly dismissed from her role during a presidential press conference. Off with her head!

Now, before this elicits too much sympathy for the now defunct First Lady, it is important to note that she herself was the president’s mistress during his marriage several years ago when

he decided to abandon his wife and four children. It’s a tawdry story, but the reason for bringing it up is that even the French, known for their indifference to the “personal” lives of their politicians, are somewhat taken aback by the entire narcissistic spectacle. Yet, such a spectacle can easily be defended in terms of the freedom, love and happiness commonly trumpeted by politicians or celebrities.

Sometimes, though, it is hard to just look away.

I have often thought what the world would look like if everyone actually decided to follow the teachings of Christ on marriage and sexuality. For one, there would be no divorce since men and women would be resolved to grow in love and learn how to sacrifice for each other. There would be no rape or children conceived outside of wedlock since men and woman would be resolved to practice self-control and to wait until marriage to enter into the marital embrace. There would be no abortion as men and women would be resolved to welcome children into their marriages even under trying situations and in those situations where they needed to postpone a pregnancy, they would be resolved to respect the integral meaning of their marital embrace and use natural family planning.

In such a world, almost all children would grow up with a mother and a father and, even in those situations where a parent was lost under tragic circumstances, the community would offer its

support and love in reaching out to the family. In such a world, children would be taught the importance of a deep reverence of God, a profound respect for the dignity of every human being, and a preferential love for the poor, the weak and the infirm. In such a world, humility, fidelity, purity, veracity and charity would be among the highest values.

Somehow, this doesn’t sound

all that terrible. What many of the secular young do not understand is that which lies at the heart of a true believer: an ardent love for God that transforms and deepens the beauty of life itself. In his article, David

Brooks closes with a quotation from St. Augustine as to why God changes everything:

“It is not physical beauty nor temporal glory nor the brightness of light dear to earthly eyes, nor the sweet melodies of all kinds of songs, nor the gentle odor of flowers, and ointments and perfumes, nor

manna or honey, nor limbs welcoming the embraces of the flesh; it is not these I love when I love my God. Yet there is a light I love, and a food, and a kind of embrace when I love my God — a light, voice, odor, food, embrace of my innerness, where my soul is floodlit by light which space cannot contain, where there is sound that time cannot seize, where there is a perfume which no breeze disperses, where there is a taste for food no amount of eating can lessen, and where there is a bond of union that no satiety can part. That is what I love when I love my God.”

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

In such a world, humility, fidelity, purity, veracity and charity would be among the highest values.



FAQ

FREQUENTLY ASKED

Office of Family Life: The Church's methods of natural family planning teach couples to observe and interpret naturally occurring signs of fertility.

QUESTIONS

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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 rate 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 strongly encouraged to take a complete natural family planning class series, which is offered in either English or Spanish throughout the diocese. For a complete schedule of diocesan NFP classes, go to www.diocesefwsb.org/diocesan-offices/family-life-office/family-planning. Also listed on this website is the contact information for other organizations that offer natural family planning classes in this diocese.

Are there other recommended resources on these issues?

Office of Family Life: The diocesan Office of Family Life has 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 present the Church's teaching on responsible parenthood, contraception and infertility. Both are available through the Cathedral Bookstore in Fort Wayne, (260) 422-4611.

The U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter, "Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan," is also a very good resource on these issues. It is available at www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/love-and-life/index.cfm.



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Oh promise me

A pastor's reflections on marriage preparation

BY MARK WEBER

*"Oh, promise me that you will take my hand,
The most unworthy in this lonely land,
And let me sit beside you in your eyes,
Seeing the vision of our paradise..."*

— Lyrics of "Oh Promise Me," by Clement Scott, 1887

Today's Catholic interviews Father Bill Sullivan, pastor, St. John the Baptist, New Haven, about marriage preparation, weddings and the sacrament of Marriage.

Today's Catholic: You have married and observed couples for more than 40 years. Considering the reality of sickness, death, unemployment, infertility, infidelity and other unforeseen circumstances, do engaged couples have a realistic idea of what may lie ahead?

Father Sullivan: A lot depends on the experience they have had with their own parents. If it has been a solid family life even in the midst of tragedy, they have the strength from their parents to go forward. If there is brokenness there, if a divorce has occurred, which unfortunately has happened all too often, they have not a fear, but a sense of "Dear God, please don't let that happen to us." They see enough among their friends who may have married maybe too quickly. They are quite "in love," but there is more to love than physical attraction ... and the more time they have in the engagement period to know each

other makes them much stronger.

Today's Catholic: On your very first assignment as a parish priest, did you prepare couples for marriage right away? If not, when did you first do so?

Father Sullivan: I was stationed at St. Jude (Fort Wayne) with Msgr. (William) Lester and other priests and we took turns preparing couples, and I embraced the couples that I had a chance to work with.

Today's Catholic: How did you do this? Did you follow a form? Did your pastor guide you?

Father Sullivan: There were guidelines we had from the diocese. There was paperwork — the prenuptial investigation. Right now we have the pre-marriage inventory and the Focus Instrument. I always tell them, we score for you — no one does better than the other one, no one wants to score better than their future spouse. But if there were things I might have uncovered in talking to the couple, I may have sought the wisdom of Msgr. Lester to help me with this.

Today's Catholic: With experience, did you modify and tailor your own method of preparing couples?

Father Sullivan: The one thing that I think is very helpful — and I'm stressing it more and more — is the faith commitment that they have. Because if you don't have a relationship with the Lord, as an individual, what are you bringing to your marriage? If you don't have a relationship with the Church, what are you bringing to the marriage? If you have neither of those, what are you going to bring to your children? And that is the first thing I always talk about after the initial session we have together — setting the date, filling out forms and telling them things that will be down the road. I see it as so important ... you're getting married in the Church. This is a sacrament. This is a sign to the world of your relationship not only to each other but with God. How strong is that and what do you want that to be?

Today's Catholic: That is the emphatic point of your marriage preparation then, right?

Father Sullivan: Over the years, concern has been expressed about the number of marriages that are breaking up, and so now you have couples going to homes of married couples for the preparation period that came through the Family Life Office. We also have the Engaged Encounter for many couples. I am aware from other brother priests that some couples who went to that Engaged Encounter realized, "we're not ready for marriage," or "you're not the right person that I should be marrying." I see that as a tremendous gift. Today, a couple goes to a diocesan day, a kind of a mini-retreat under the Family Life Office, they attend natural family planning workshops, and we get certificates from both that they have participated. I'm not sure now how many couples go to the home of a married couple in preparation. Because of the crazy schedules of people, couples find it more convenient to take that one Saturday for a diocesan mini-retreat than to schedule three visits to the home of a married couple.

Today's Catholic: Have you ever discouraged a couple from entering into marriage? If so, why?

Father Sullivan: I've wondered about some couples. And as it turned out, the hunch was true. The marriage did not last that long. We have a responsibility to witness the marriage. We have a responsibility to write down our observations and put that in the parish record, in the paperwork, so that if something should happen. You know they have the right to marriage but there is a little wisdom, I think, between relationships. And sometimes there are obvious problems that come out in scoring the Focus Instrument. Some of it comes out in just talking with them. I remember one couple in particular, asking the woman, when we were alone: "Why are you marrying him? Look what he has been doing." It lasted about

six months. It breaks my heart, it breaks my heart, because she deserved better.

Today's Catholic: What is the Focus Instrument?

Father Sullivan: It looks over a number of different areas in their relationship with each other — communication, problem solving, extended family issues, finances, children, religion, and marriage covenant — those kinds of areas. There are statements they respond to with: "I agree," "I disagree," or "I am uncertain." And we tell them to respond with the first thing that comes to your mind as (it) concerns your relationship with each other or with the Church.

Today's Catholic: Do priests see weddings as a chore?

Father Sullivan: We have a responsibility to guide them. I like it when couples come and I ask (them) if they have particular questions. If they don't start talking about all of the little odds and ends of the marriage, that tells me they are serious about what they are about to do. The day is not the periphery. The day is the sacrament.

Today's Catholic: How often do you see a couple for marriage preparation?

Father Sullivan: Right now the first session is getting to know them. They fill out forms about the prenuptial investigation. I share with them information about affidavits and baptismal certificates. I give them the Focus Instrument that they are to complete and return and then score. Then I meet with them two or three times.

If it is a couple where one is not of the Catholic faith, I have a time with them to answer any questions that person may have about the Church. Because my encouragement is pray together as often as possible on Sunday or Saturday night. If he belongs to another church, obviously, he's going to go there, but the more often they can get together, they stronger they become.

I spend two or three times going over the Focus Instrument. The first one is on the spiritual life and their relationship with the Church ... because some of them have been away from the Church. What happened? How may we help you? Come home. I'm glad you're home. This is where you want to be.

The second one is regarding children. I always say, "You know you're going to stand before the Lord and say, 'in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, I will love you and honor you all the days of my life' and ask if they are open to the gift of children." I always give them homework and I always say, "a little birdie told me last night that you're going to be blessed with eight children. Tell me what you think about the little birdie." Sometimes they gasp. And on occasion, I'll get someone who will say, "Is that all?" And I find out how much they've talked about children and we go into natural family planning, and there is much more in the family planning workshop they go to. There is a sacredness here — openness to life. That's what I look at. Then we go over to the church and we talk about the wedding. When the rehearsal comes, I tell them the rehearsal will last 45 minutes, so if they have somewhere else to be, they will be on time.


Today's Catholic: Can you remember the first couple you married? Were you nervous?

Father Sullivan: I can't, but just yesterday morning, a couple came to church here and said, "You witnessed our marriage 40 years ago." They were from another parish and they knew that I had been transferred and came here to welcome me back to town.

Today's Catholic: If you had supreme authority to change or modify requirements for marriage in the Catholic faith, would you do so? What would you change?

Father Sullivan: That's a tough one. My first response is that my heart goes out to those who are married and divorced and long to come back and are in a second marriage. I know that in the Church we always uphold the sacredness of the bond, but to see people in church who can't go to Communion, that kills me.

One of the issues we have now in our culture is cohabitation, and to address that issue is very sensitive. ... When I encounter that, I say to them, "Could you separate?" Much of the time they say "yes." Often the reason they got together in the first place was to save money. There's more to life and love than money. I've had couples come back and say, "Thank you, thank you. We've learned a lot about each other when we were not together."



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Natural Family Planning:

Living the 'body language' of married love

BY LISA EVERETT

Soon-to-be saint John Paul II devoted a significant part of his pontificate to articulating 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. In fact, the late Holy Father developed his beautiful "theology of the body" largely as a way to understand more deeply and to explain more positively this essential difference.

What concept of the human person and human sexuality does the pope's "theology of the body" expound? It begins with the belief — echoed in Sacred Scripture, in reason, and in the deep recesses of the human heart — that man and woman are created in the image and likeness of God. This is so important to reflect on at the outset, because unless we know who God is, we will never know who we are. God is Love, and He lives in Himself a mystery of personal, loving communion that we call the Holy Trinity. In this communion of persons, God the Father is the lover, God the Son is the beloved, and the love between them is so perfect, so real, that it is actually another person — the Holy Spirit. If we are created in the image and likeness of a God who is not an individual but rather, a loving communion of persons, then we resemble God not only because of the rational mind and free will we have as individual men and women — we image God more perfectly and profoundly by living in loving communion with one another.

God created marriage to be the first, and in a sense, the most fundamental form of living out the personal, loving communion that makes us like God. Pope John Paul II found in the familiar story of Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, an ancient affirmation of this truth that man and woman are made for each and meant to be

a gift for each other. This call to communion is "written" in a special way into human sexuality, into the very maleness and femaleness of the human body, which are literally designed to fit together, making a man and woman capable of becoming "one flesh." As Blessed John Paul II put it: "(Sexuality) is an enrichment of the whole person — body, emotions and soul — and it manifests its inmost meaning in leading the person to the gift of self in love." — "Familiaris consortio," 37.

Sexual intercourse is intended by God to be the most intimate sign of the mutual gift of self that a man and woman make to one another in marriage. In sexual union, a husband and wife say with their bodies in a very private way what they said publicly at the altar on their wedding day: "I accept you completely as the gift from God that you are, and I give myself to you completely in return." Sex is the body language of married love. This mutual gift of self, which is expressed in sexual union, is not meant to end with the couple, but rather, makes them capable of the greatest possible gift: becoming co-creators with God in giving life to a new human person. The communion of love between a husband and wife is meant to mirror the love that exists between the Father and the Son, a love that is literally "personified" in the Holy Spirit. In a similar way, through the privilege of procreation, God enables the love between a husband and wife to become "personified" in the gift of their child, who is literally the two of them in one flesh, a living reflection of their love and a permanent sign of their unity. And what is more, this new human being bears not only the image and likeness of his or her parents, but above all, the image and likeness of God.

So we see that the love-giving and life-giving meanings of sexual union are intimately linked, like two sides of the same coin, because they mirror the inner life of God who is love. This beautiful vision is the basis of all of the moral norms, which surround the gift of sexuality, including the norm that

requires that every act of sexual love in marriage remain open to the transmission of life. Because God has inscribed in sexual intercourse an inseparable connection between its love-giving capacity and its life-giving capacity, married couples must respect the integrity of this act whenever they choose to engage in it.

How, precisely, are contraception and sterilization irreconcilable with this concept of the human person and human sexuality? In essence, contraception and sterilization contradict the meaning of sex as an expression of total self-giving. If I withhold my fertility from my spouse, which is an integral part of my identity as a man or woman, I am not giving myself totally in the very act which is supposed to express most profoundly my complete gift of self. Here is how Pope John Paul II explained it:

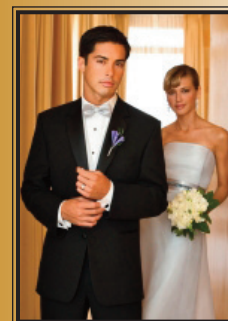
"When couples, by means of recourse to contraception, separate these two meanings (love-giving and life-giving) that God the Creator has inscribed in the being of man and woman and in the dynamism of their sexual communion, they act as 'arbiters' of the divine plan and they 'manipulate' and degrade human sexuality — and with it themselves and their married partner — by altering its value of 'total' self-giving. Thus the innate language that expresses the total, reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is overlaid, through contraception, by an objectively contradictory language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other. This leads not only to a positive refusal to be open to life but also to a falsification of the inner truth of conjugal love, which is called upon to give itself in personal totality."

The Catholic Church promotes natural family planning (NFP) because it completely corresponds with God's design for human sexuality, respecting the "body language" of married love and the inseparable link between its love-giving and life-giving purposes. NFP is a scientifically based method of regulating conception based on observing and interpreting the "sign language," so to speak, that a

woman's body naturally provides, which indicates whether she is fertile or infertile on any given day. NFP allows a couple to prayerfully discern on a periodic basis whether or not God is calling them to conceive a child and then to identify the days on which conception is possible should they desire to achieve or avoid a pregnancy. International studies confirm that when spouses are properly instructed and follow the rules carefully, NFP can have an effectiveness rate of 98-99 percent. Couples are also taught how the practice of exclusive, extended breast-feeding provides a significant period of infertility after the birth of a child. This kind of breast-feeding is, in fact, the most basic form of NFP because it can have the effect of naturally spacing the births of chil-

dren over the course of a woman's childbearing years. Many couples find that the mutual respect, regular communication and shared responsibility that the practice of NFP requires strengthens their relationship with one other. Most importantly, couples who use NFP have the assurance that they are acting as faithful stewards of God's gifts of sexuality and fertility.

For information on a Natural Family Planning class near you, contact the diocesan Office of Family Life at (574) 234-0687 or visit <http://www.diocesefwsb.org/Natural-Family-Planning>.



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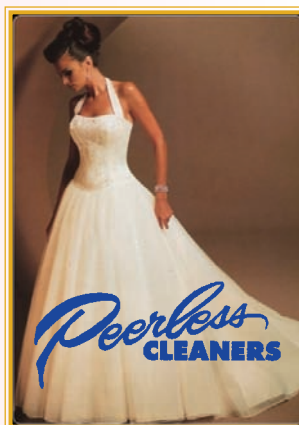
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Marriage licensing rules and regulations

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 statewide.

- 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.

'For Your Marriage' Web site offers resources for couples of all faiths

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Putting a modern image on traditional values, the U.S. Catholic bishops launched a website 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 from married couples.

"The Internet has become a crucial means for evangelizing, especially among younger people," said Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, chairman of the bishops' Marriage and Family Life Committee. "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 multiyear National Pastoral Initiative for Marriage. The website and the entire campaign promote the simple exhortation to do something for your marriage.

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What is appropriate wedding attire for church?

BY LISA EVERETT

Every bride wants to look beautiful on her wedding day, and every bridesmaid hopes to wear a dress that is both fashionable and flattering. Beauty, after all, is one of the attributes of God, and women in a special way bear witness to the power of beauty to attract our attention. But part of the allure of beauty lies not only in what it reveals, but also in what it conceals, and this is where the meaning of modesty comes in.

Consider this beautiful description from the Catechism of the Catholic Church: "Modesty protects the intimate center of the person. It means refusing to unveil what should remain hidden. It is ordered to chastity to whose sensitivity it bears witness. ... Modesty protects the mystery of persons and their love." — Nos. 2521-2522.

In a nutshell, then, modesty means dressing in a way that is attractive but does not draw attention to one's sex appeal or arouse sexual desire in another person.

When planning a wedding, it is important to take into consideration the fact that many bridal fashions today are much more revealing than in the past, and are not always appropriate attire for Church, which is a holy place — the house of God. In this regard, many Catholic churches take their cue from the dress code that is strictly enforced at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, which specifies that clothing should cover the shoulders and knees for both men and women.

If we apply this standard to wedding attire, it means no plunging necklines or dresses that fall way above the knee. And while the majority of wedding gowns and bridesmaids' dresses marketed today are strapless, it is possible to find some that are not, and some local retail bridal shops are able to add sleeves or wider straps to any of their offerings.

An alternative is to accessorize with an attractive wedding bolero, shrug, shawl or jacket, which are all over websites like Etsy.

Modesty protects the intimate center of the person. It means refusing to unveil what should remain hidden.



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