Dear Engaged Couple,

Congratulations on your engagement! I want to welcome you to this time of marriage preparation in the Catholic Church. While you already have had time to discover whether this is the right man or woman to marry, this is a special period meant for more than just arranging the wedding ceremony and the reception — it also should be a time of grace in preparation for your future lives together.

As you work with our priests and married couples, they will help you reflect on various issues dealing with both your past and your future. One important area which many priests and couples have shared their concerns with me is that of engaged couples living together before marriage. Not too long ago, such a situation was uncommon and seen unfavorably in society. Today, it is much more common and there is not as much of a social stigma attached to it. Even so, regardless of a couple’s motivations, living together and having sexual relations before marriage cannot be reconciled with what God expects of us nor with what makes good sense for the relationship.

Contrary to popular belief couples who live together before marriage have higher rates of divorce and domestic violence, and have a poorer quality of communication than those who do not. Studies show only negative results from living together before marriage. I write this not to make couples who are living together feel they are being judged. Rather, I write it to encourage them to use this time of preparation to live a truly Christian lifestyle. This applies also to those couples who have not been living together, but already have been engaging in sexual relations. Remember, your engagement is meant to be a time of grace and growth in preparing for your marriage.

In the months ahead, I urge all engaged couples who are living together to separate and those who are engaging in sexual relations to stop. Those who are Catholic should seek to be reconciled with God by going to confession. The generosity, self restraint and good communication that are needed for marriage do not suddenly appear on the wedding day; they must be cultivated far in advance. Living chastely during your remaining months of engagement will teach you many things about one another. Such chaste living can draw you closer together. It may even reveal to you that you are not quite ready for Christian marriage at this time. In the days ahead, it is my hope and prayer for you that you will seek the help of God, who alone can fulfill your deepest hopes for your life together.

Sincerely yours in Our Lord,

Most Reverend John M. D’Arcy
Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend

Guidelines offered for those preparing for marriage

FEBRUARY 15, 2009   SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT ON WEDDINGS

Wedding FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions

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More on the guidelines for preparing for marriage

PAGE 4

George Killian
Natural family planning: Separating myth from fact

BY LISA EVERETT

W

We all know how difficult it is to separate myth from fact about many issues, and natural family planning (NFP) 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 Gynecological Endocrinology at the University of Heidelberg, Germany, said: “For a contraceptive method to be rated as highly effective 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.”


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 2007 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 Victor 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, the study authors Irri Sinis, Ph.D. and Marcos Arevado, 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 woman’s cycle is comparable to that of couples using other methods of family planning.

“It’s important that the health-care 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. Arevado, the institute’s director of biomedical research.

Source: Georgetown University Medical Center (2005, Oct. 12). It’s All In The Timing. ScienceDaily. Available at www.sciencedaily.com

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

Fact: NFP can be used by women with irregular cycles. A study of women using NFP had been established in more than 100 countries.

In the study, researchers found that women who used NFP had been established in more than 100 countries. For example, in the study 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 user-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.


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

Fact: NFP is not as difficult to learn as contraception.

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 user-effectiveness of the method in fertility control.

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Myth No. 5: When used to avoid pregnancy, NFP is really no different from 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 the procreation of a new human person, who is literally the two of them “in one flesh.”

Inscribed in this sacred act, therefore, is the 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 aspects of sex: the sex act itself and the procreation of new human life. 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 not 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 God’s love. 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.

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

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 sacramentalty 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 dioecese, 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 proclaimer of the word needs to 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. Being proclaimer of the word is not a role a non-Catholic can take in the Mass. However, a non-Catholic can serve as a gift bearer or read the petitions during the prayer of the faithful.

FAQ: What are the guidelines regarding parish membership and our wedding and priests saying the Mass?

Office of Worship: These rules really depend on the parish.

FAQ: I am close to a pastor from my youth. Could he celebrate the wedding and priests saying the Mass?

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.
Guidelines for marriage preparation, couples living together

Question: Is it true the diocese has issued a policy for couples preparing for marriage?
Answer: Yes, in preparing couples for marriage in the Catholic Church, the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend pledges to assist you in entering this vocation with faith, emotional maturity and full intentions regarding fidelity, openness to children and permanence. We expect couples to be attending Mass regularly (if Catholic), to be living apart and reserving sexual relations until after the wedding, and to be modeling the virtues of charity and justice in their lives.

If a pastor evaluates that a couple is unable or unwilling to accept or work toward these expectations, then he may delay marriage in the church while continuing to minister to the couple in the hope of fostering their spiritual and emotional growth. Or he may ask that the wedding ceremony be small — for example, the couple, two witnesses and the immediate families.

Question: My fiancé and I think we should wait several years before marriage. We're trying to save money by living together.

Answer: We offer these responses to three common reasons given to parish — and therefore can be living together before marriage, the couple implicitly is communicating to all who know them that there is nothing wrong with this action when, in fact, there is. For example, this can be especially misleading to young nieces, nephews and children of friends whose moral reasoning could be misled by the example of the adults they look up to.

Question: What is the best way to prepare spiritually for marriage?
Answer: Catholic Engaged Encounter has a saying, “A wedding is for a day, but a marriage is for a lifetime.” The church is concerned for the future good and growth of Christian marriages. The best way to get ready for marriage, if you are a Catholic, is to practice your faith. Catholics do this by celebration of weekly Sunday Mass, by reception of the sacrament of reconciliation (confession), through prayer, and by practicing works of justice and charity. If you have been away from the practice of attending the Eucharist regularly, the priest will want to see you return to participating in the Eucharist every Sunday. If it has been a long time since your last confession, the priest will help you. During the days of preparation, you are strongly encouraged to pray together as a couple, read Scripture and lead a virtuous life. For guidance, look to other couples with strong Christian values.

Question: As a Catholic, do I really have to buy into all of the church’s expectations about Mass attendance and those other things?
Answer: The church sees the vocation of marriage as being bigger than just the man and woman involved. In fact, married life has a special grace flowing through it by which the life of the married couple is called to mirror the love and commitment Jesus Christ made to each of us, a promise we interpret as being “our salvation.”

That’s why we dare to say marriage is a sacrament, a living sign of God’s promise to help us love as well as God has loved us.

Question: Why does the Catholic Church get so involved in our wedding? Isn’t it up to the bride and groom to make these choices?
Answer: The church wants you to prepare not just for the wedding day but for your married life. We see it as a vocational commitment that has an impact on you and the whole church.
FAQ
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

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 used to avoid pregnancy, NFP can have an effectiveness rate of 98-99 percent. To learn more, visit the diocesan Web site at www.dioce-sefwsb.org/FAMILY/nfp.

FAQ: Are there videos or diocesan training 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. Natural Family Planning classes are available throughout the diocese. See the diocesan Web site at www.dioce-sefwsb.org/FAMILY for the complete schedule of diocesan classes. The Couple to Couple League (www.ccli.org for a list of local teachers) and Creighton Model Services (cctschor-tgen1980@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.

FAQ: If we have infertility issues, what does the church say about in vitro fertilization?
Office of Family Life: The church teaches the sexual union of spouses is the only setting worthy of the conception of a new human person. This is because the dignity of a child demands that he or she be given life through a personal act that expresses the total self-giving of his or her parents. While medical interventions, which assist marital intercourse to achieve conception are morally good, reproductive technologies, which replace or substitute for marital relations, are morally wrong. Since in vitro fertilization (IVF) achieves conception by having technicians join sperm and ovum in a laboratory petri dish, rather than through the loving sexual embrace of husband and wife, this widely used procedure is seriously wrong. In addition, the practice of IVF commonly involves the destruction of "spare" embryos which are not destroyed, donated or frozen for future use.

NaPro Technology is a new approach to diagnosing and treating infertility that is completely ethical and much more effective than IVF. Contact the diocesan Office of Family Life, (574) 234-0687 for a list of health care professionals in our diocese who have been trained to provide NaPro Technology.

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2009 Diocesan Conferences for Engaged Couples

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“Our office will provide training for those couples who might be interested in helping with this ministry,” says Everett. “The conference offers us a chance to provide engaged couples with a wide range of information, while the follow-up sessions are designed to provide more personal attention.”

The diocesan conferences are all-day Saturday events. The Evereets will talk on the meaning of married love, communication and intimacy and partnership in marriage. They will also provide a Natural Family Planning overview and a talk introducing theology of the body. In the past, Father Bob Lengerich, associate pastor at St. Pius X in Granger, has given a dynamic Power Point presentation on the spirituality of marriage and family. Whether it’s Father Lengerich or another priest giving the talk, the spirituality of marriage and family will be presented at each conference.

Another featured speaker is Lisa Marino, RCIA director at St. Matthew Cathedral Parish in South Bend. She is enthusiastic about sharing Pope John Paul II’s teachings on sexuality and married love.

“It’s important for engaged couples to learn about theology of the body because this is the most comprehensive way the church teaches about the gift of self that spouses make to each other in the sacrament of marriage,” explains Marino. “It challenges couples to see Christ as the source and center of their marriage, which in turn will allow them to go deeper with their gift of self.”

Marino says the response has been “surprised interest” since the teaching seems to be relatively new to most couples.

“ isothe same time, I notice that as I advance through the 50-minute talk, the couples’ interest seems to continue to increase and not decrease,” adds Marino. “This teaching on marriage really cuts through a lot of the lies the culture sells the young dating and engaged couples, and the couples are left with making the choice of either believing the ‘world’ or ‘The Word Made Flesh.’”

Marino’s advice to couples considering marriage: “Pray together regularly and seek a radical openness to God’s will in their lives through reflection on Christ’s nuptial love for us on the Cross. I would also advise couples build their relationship on a solid sacramental spirituality; to begin or continue the practice of monthly confession and attending weekday Mass whenever possible, in addition to regular Sunday Masses.”

The conferences take place at the Grand Wayne Center in Fort Wayne or at the Century Center in South Bend and are sponsored by the Office of Family Life. For more information, call (574) 234-0687.

Muslims, Catholics may face obstacles when trying to intermarry

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Father Philip Latronico, a priest of the Archdiocese of Newark, N.J., remembers the unbridled love of a couple he once married.

Seemingly driven by destiny, the two had been friends since high school, and life kept bringing them back together.

“No matter what happened, they kept coming back to each other,” said Father Latronico.

When they were ready for marriage, the groom-to-be came to Father Latronico for help and advice: He was Catholic and his fiancé was Muslim.

The marriage of a Muslim woman to a non-Muslim man is controversial if not illegal in Islam. If a Muslim woman marries a non-Muslim man, her family and the Muslim community must cut ties with her.

Father Latronico, executive secretary of the Archdiocese of Newark’s interreligious and Christian unity offices since 1993, has experience managing the delicate situation an interfaith relationship can present.

For this couple, who asked that their names not be used, Father Latronico drew up the marriage contract and married the couple in a garden, rather than in a church or a mosque. The bride wore traditional Pakistani gowns and her hands were dotted with henna.

“The personal love of each other is so strong ... it overcame the barrier of the two faiths” and they knew “God would accept what they were doing,” said Father Latronico.

The priest also encouraged the bride to attend services at the mosque more frequently and urged the couple to talk openly about their faiths in the household.

Before they were wed, the couple agreed that when they had children the girls would be Muslim and the boys would be Catholic. Catholic women worship separately from men in a mosque, and the couple did not want their children to worship alone.

Up until the day of the wedding, imams who knew about the marriage tried to convince the bride not to marry a Catholic, said Father Latronico.

In an interfaith society such as the U.S., interfaith marriages are “something that Muslims are still starting to deal with,” he told Catholic News Service. “Islam is trying to adapt itself to the culture that they are in.”

Although the Catholic Church does not keep track of how many Catholic-Muslim marriages there are in the United States, the phenomenon is becoming more common.

Father Francis Tiso, associate director of the U.S. bishops’ Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, is pictured in Washington Jan. 29.

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WEDDINGS

Worldwide Marriage Encounter strongly supports For Your Marriage initiative

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. — Strong support for the Catholic Church’s For Your Marriage initiative was announced last year by the National Secretariat of Worldwide Marriage Encounter (WWME).

“It is our belief that vibrant, long lasting and dedicated marriages can and do exist and that married couples are seeking to make their good marriages, great marriages. The focus of the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops on supporting and helping to foster good marriage principles is an effort that we all need to get behind and encourage,” said Tony and Cathy Witzak and Father Emile Frishe, the WWME National Secretariat Ecclesial Team.

The new USCCB marriage initiative has many facets with one of the key elements being its www.foryourmarriage.org Web site. The Web site contains much useful information and tips, stories and ideas to keep marriages alive and healthy. There has also been a strong emphasis on public service announcements and other related programs.

“It is our hope and dream that through this effort, along with Worldwide Marriage Encounter’s focus on supporting marriages, that married couples will see the beauty in their relationships and let others observe that happy, healthy marriages are flourishing throughout the United States,” the national secretariat team said.

Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekends start on a Friday evening and end on Sunday afternoon. Couples hear a presentation by a couple and priest and are asked to write down their thoughts and feelings, then go to share in the privacy of their room. There is no group discussion. Weekends are held in various locations including hotels and retreat centers.

There is a cost for the weekend, but in the 40-year history of Worldwide Marriage Encounter, no couple has ever been turned away from attending a weekend because of lack of money.

Worldwide Marriage Encounter is a nonprofit organization and all donations from the weekend are used to continue offering additional weekends throughout the country and the world.

Married couples who want to learn more about making their “good marriages, better” can find Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekends that are presented all over the United States.

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MUSLIM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

could get out of jail in time to catch his flight home to the U.S. He never got the divorce papers.

Muslims in the Middle East “see American women ... (as) not submissive to their husbands ... and as loose sexually,” Esteban said. They learn about American women from the movies, which is “partly why the Middle East sees the West as though we have no morals,” Esteban explained. Esteban and Alriashi know they will need to compromise. They have agreed to disagree about certain things such as Jesus and pork.

“I know they (Muslims) pray five times a day, and I laugh, saying I pray all the time,” Esteban said.

In an effort to provide a resource to Catholic and Muslim leaders, marriage preparation personnel and inter-faith couples on the subject of mixed marriages, the Mid-Atlantic Dialogue of Catholics and Muslims created a document, “Marriage: Catholic and Sunni Muslim Perspectives,” scheduled to be published this year. Sunni Muslims form the largest branch of Islam.

The document says both Catholics and Muslims believe that marriage is a blessing from God between a man and a woman and that families “play a pivotal role in providing an environment in which faith may be nurtured.”

“While Catholics and Muslims hold many things differently, they nonetheless agree on many important features of marriage and family life,” it says.

When asked if there is an ideal interfaith marriage — from the perspective of Islam or Catholicism — Father Tiso answered, “No.” Although a perfect interfaith marriage from both faiths’ point of view would be “difficult to imagine,” both faiths tolerate interfaith marriages, he said.

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ANGELINA ESTEBAN

WEDDINGS
Living together before marriage: A look at the facts

BY LISA EVERETT

Fact No. 1: The percentage of couples who live together before marriage has increased dramatically in the past several decades.

According to Dr. David Popenoe, professor of sociology at Rutgers University and co-director of the National Marriage Project, “The practice of cohabitation has grown enormously. As of 2002, over 50 percent of women ages 19 to 44 had cohabited for a portion of their lives, compared to 33 percent in 1987 and virtually none 100 years ago. And it should come as no surprise that at the same time cohabitation rates have skyrocketed, marriage rates have plummeted.”

In his 2008 report (available at http://marriage.rutgers.edu/Publications/NMP2008CohabitationReport.pdf), Popenoe analyzes the reasons behind this rising trend: “To a large extent, cohabitation is an offshoot of the sexual revolution that began in the 1960s, a revolution which essentially gave premarital sex a social stamp of approval. Even more importantly, it was a time when relatively reliable birth control for women first became available, followed soon by the legalization of abortion. These revolutionary changes greatly diminished the age-old problem of unwanted pregnancy for unmarried women. With women now socially permitted to have sex before marriage, far more women became sexually available to men and men no longer had to marry to regularize their sexual lives. Men reacted by pulling back from marriage and from having children, expanding their now notorious ‘inability to commit.’ This gradually took the form not just of having regular sex outside of marriage but of actually living with one’s sexual partner in non-marital cohabitation.”

Fact No. 2: Young adults whose parents have divorced are much more likely to cohabit.

While couples cohabit for different reasons, including financial concerns and convenience, research conducted by Duquesne University’s Family Institute found that young adults of divorced parents have the highest rates of cohabitation. David Popenoe explains the logic behind this statistic: “Children of divorce are much more likely to cohabit because they have a fear of breakup. They like the trial marriage idea.” Since 1970, 42 million people have seen their parents divorce. “Today’s couples in their 20s and 30s distrust marriage,” concludes Judith Wallerstein, Julia Lewis, and Sandra Blakeslee in The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce: A 25-Year Landmark Study (New York: Hyperion, 2000 [17]).

Fact No. 3: Most couples who cohabit do not eventually marry.

In the 1970s, 60 percent of cohabiting couples eventually married, whereas only 33 percent of cohabiting couples eventually married in the 1990s. (Andrew Cherlin, The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage, Journal of Marriage and Family 66 (Nov. 2004: 849, [14]) According to a study conducted by Ohio State University sociologist Sharon Sasser and University of Michigan sociologist James McNally, nearly 60 percent of couples who currently live together before marriage do not go on to marry.

Fact No. 4: Couples who lived together before marriage report lower rates of marital satisfaction than couples who do not cohabit.

A study of over 300 newlyweds by the National Council on Family Relations found that those who cohabited first were less happy in their marriages. Women in particular complained about the quality of communication after the wedding. A study by researchers Alfred DeMars and Gerald Leslie (1984) found that those who live together prior to marriage scored lower on tests rating satisfaction with their marriages than couples who did not cohabit. Another study by Dr. Joyce Brothers showed that cohabitation has a negative affect on the quality of a subsequent marriage (Scott 1994).

Fact No. 5: Couples who live together before marriage are much more likely to divorce than couples who do not cohabit.

According to research by David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead (“Should We Live Together? What Young Adults Need to Know About Cohabitation Before Marriage,” 1999), couples who cohabit are almost 50 percent more likely to divorce than couples who marry without cohabiting first.

This statistic should come as no surprise, comments Popenoe: “One big reason for cohabiting is that you are not fully committed to the other person for the long-term. So breakup is more likely.”

In their book, “The Case for Marriage,” co-authors Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher make the same point, adding that one of cohabitation’s biggest attractions is the ability to make an “easy exit.”

In his 2008 report, David Popenoe analyzes the reasons behind this sociological statistic: “Many studies in the U.S. have shown that couples who cohabit before marriage have a higher risk of divorce when they do marry. Several reasons have been put forth to account for this. One is that it is mostly due to selectivity: that is, those people who are willing to cohabit are the same people who already are more divorce prone. They may be less committed to traditional family values, less inclined toward or more tentative regarding long-term relationships, and may have personality traits that make them less suitable as marriage partners. A second reason involves the actual experience of cohabitation, that is, attitudes and behaviors developed through cohabitation may be inimical to long-term marriage. For example, cohabitation may generate the attitude that relationships are mainly for the purpose of testing compatibility, an attitude poisonous to long-term marriages. A third reason is that cohabiting couples, compared to dating couples, often find it harder to break up due to the greater complications of household and financial as well as emotional matters. They therefore may drift through inertia into inappropriate marriages, only to break up farther down the line.”

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

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LOVE IS ALL YOU NEED
Romance in the air: Films on DVD just in time for Valentine’s Day

BY HARRY FORBES
AND JOHN MULDERIG

NEW YORK (CNS) — Just in time for Valentine’s Day, Warner Home Video has, in one fell swoop, released two groupings of films the company has labeled as “romance.” The first group — available only individually — have some literary distinction; the second group — a boxed set of four films in the glossy, soap-opera vein — is, despite the genre, not without interest.

The “All-Star Romance” bunch gives us adaptations of John Steinbeck, Thomas Hardy, James Hilton and Robert Sherwood, and an original from renowned playwright Terence Rattigan.

The so-called “Romance Classics Collection” features early 1960s idol Troy Donahue as the star of all four films, but perhaps it was felt his name meant little in today’s market. And of further interest, three of the four showcase the work of underrated director Delmer Daves. Observed today from a purely cinematic and sociological perspective, the films are of rather more interest than the original disparaging reviews below would indicate.

Trailers aside, the films are presented pretty much bare-bones, but the transfers are all excellent, in the Warner custom.

None have been rated by the Motion Picture Association of America, except “Cannery Row” and “Goodbye, Mr. Chips.”

“All-Star Romance” (1940-1982; sold singly)

“Cannery Row” (1982)

A marine biologist with a troubled past (Nick Nolte) pursues an irascible romance with a drifter turned reluctant prostitute (Debra Winger), amid the antics of the eccentric hobos (led by M. Emmet Walsh) who populate the depressed titular district of mid-20th century Monterey, Calif.

Writer-director David S. Ward’s adaptation of two Steinbeck novels, narrated by John Huston, is warmly atmospheric and portrays the scientist as intent on rescuing his love from her newly chosen lifestyle, but it also sees him in an adulterous affair. Prostitution throner, Thelma, observed partial nudity, sexual references, a few cuss words, and at least a dozen uses of profanity. The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is A-II — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children.

“Far From the Madding Crowd” (1967)

Excellent British screen version of Thomas Hardy’s romantic melodrama of early Victorian country life with Julie Christie being pursued by Peter Finch, Terence Stamp and Alan Bates. Director John Schlesinger avoids the pitfalls of the formula blockbuster and comes up with a superbly realistic, atmospheric production filmed entirely on location in Hardy’s home county. Dorset. The DVD features three additional minutes only seen in the film’s European release. The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is A-III — adults.

“Goodbye, Mr. Chips” (1969)

Musical version of the Hilton novel with Peter O’Toole as the distracted, unbinding schoolmaster who is set upon, conquered and finally bankrupted by a music hall performer (Petula Clark). Director Herbert Ross shifts the focus from the academic to the happy marriage of such unlikely opposites, with pleasant songs by Leslie Bricusse pacing an old-fashioned romance. The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is A-I — general patronage. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is G — general audiences. All ages admitted.

“Waterloo Bridge” (1940)

Sentimental romantic tragedy of World War I as a Scottish captain (Robert Taylor) and a London ballet student (Vivien Leigh) fall in love, but before they can wed he’s sent to the front, then reported dead. Directed by Mervyn LeRoy from Robert E. Sherwood’s play, the moody photography and a strong supporting cast (notably Lucile Watson and Virginia Field) are pluses. Romantic complications, veiled treatment of prostitution and suicide. The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is A-III — adults.

“The Yellow Rolls-Royce” (1965)

Slickly elegant romantic melodrama in which the automobile of the title passes from an English aristocrat (Rex Harrison) in Ascot to an American gangster (George C. Scott) in Florence and a Scandinavian heiress (Ingrid Bergman) in Yugoslavia. Written by Rattigan, and directed by Anthony Asquith, the film’s third tale is the only one that has any weight. Sexual situations and some stylized violence. The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is L — limited adult audience, films whose problematic content may adults would find troubling.


“Palm Springs Weekend” (1963)

Dated romantic comedy set in the title’s desert resort where Easter-vacationing college students (Donahue, Jerry Van Dyke, Connie Stevens and others) team up with a movie stuntman (Ty Hardin), a troubled playboy (Robert Conrad) and the local police chief’s daughter (Stefanie Powers). Directed by Norman Taurog, the formula plot has no surprises. Stylized violence with a youth gang and sexual situations. The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is A-III — adults.

“Parish” (1961)

Potboiler in which a young woman (Donahue) goes to work for the Connecticut tobacco grower (Karl Malden) whom his mother (Claudette Colbert) has married, then quits the job with his unscrupulous stepfather to work for his less wealthy but more honorable rival (Dean Jagger). Directed by Daves, the soapy proceedings are awash in inept plotting, overriding action and unconvincing situations. Sexual situations and innuendo. The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is A-III — adults.

“Rome Adventure” (1962)

Romantic clunker about a young American (John Ireland, Pleshette) in Rome to see the sights while looking for a job, then finds true love with an art student (Donahue) until his former flame (Angie Dickinson) turns up to reclaim him. Writer-director Daves pours on the treacle shamelessly, but the camera loves the beautiful Italian landscapes and grand cultural monuments. Romantic complications and sexual innuendo. The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is A-III — adults.

“Susan Slade” (1961)

Slick sudser about a young woman (Stevens) whose lover dies, leaving her pregnant, and then her parents (Dorothy McGuire and Lloyd Nolan) try to avoid a scandal by pretending the baby is their own until their unhappy daughter is courted by a rich man’s son (Bert Convy) and a struggling would-be novelist (Donahue). Directed by Daves, the soapy proceedings feature much hollow moralizing in plush San Francisco surroundings. The tangled consequences of a premarital affair. The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is A-III — adults.

Harry Forbes is director and John Mulderig is on the staff of the Office for Film & Broadcasting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. More reviews are available online at www.usccb.org/movies.
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 with relational questions and a wedding planner is the perfect

• 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.

Fort Wayne’s Finest Bakery & Pastry Shop

BY CINDY WOODEN

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Granting marriage annulments too easily and without real cause plays into a modern form of pessimism which basically says human beings are not able to make lifelong commitments to loving another person, Pope Benedict XVI said.

“We run the risk of falling into an anthropological pessimism which, in the light of today’s cultural situation, considers it almost impossible to marry,” the pope said in a speech Jan. 29 to members of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota.

The tribunal mainly deals with appeals filed in marriage annulment cases.

Pope Benedict said there is still a need to deal with a problem Pope John Paul II pointed out in a 1987 speech to the Roman Rota, that of saving the church community from “the scandal of seeing the value of Christian marriage destroyed in practice by the exaggerated and almost automatic multiplication of declarations of nullity.”

Pope Benedict said he agreed with Pope John Paul that too often members of church tribunals see a failed marriage and grant the annulment on the basis of an ill-defined case of “immaturity or psychic weakness.”

According to canon law, the validity of a marriage requires that both the man and woman freely and publicly consent to the union and that they have the psychological capacity to assume the obligations of marriage.

Pope Benedict said tribunal judges must remember there is a difference between the full maturity and understanding that people should strive to develop over time and “canonical maturity, which is the minimum point of departure for the validity of a marriage.”

In addition, he said, granting an annulment on the basis of the “psychic incapacity” of the husband or wife requires that the tribunal establish and document the fact that the person had a serious psychological or psychiatric problem at the time the wedding was celebrated.

In defending the permanent and sacramental nature of marriage, tribunals are not making life difficult for couples that want to split up, the pope said.

Defending the marriage bond gives witness to the fact that the ability to love and to pledge oneself to another forever is part of human nature, he said.

The church’s insistence that it is possible for the vast majority of people to make a lasting commitment to marriage can help couples “discover the natural reality of marriage and the importance it has in the plan of salvation,” Pope Benedict said.

It is true that human nature is limited and imperfect, but that does not mean that people, “exercising human freedom supported by grace,” cannot make a commitment to loving each other and raising a family together, he said.
Pope says Christians need to promote life, traditional families

BY CAROL GLATZ

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Today more than ever, Christian families need to pay witness to and promote the irreplaceable value of life and the family based on marriage between a man and a woman, Pope Benedict XVI said.

“The best service that we Christians can offer today’s society,” the pope said, is being “people who are free and rich with human and Gospel values who are on a journey toward holiness.”

The traditional family is “an indispensable foundation of society and peoples as well as an irreplaceable good for children who deserve to come into the world as a fruit of love and the total and generous giving of the parents,” he said at the end of the Sixth World Meeting of Families, which took place Jan. 14-18 in Mexico City.

The pope made his comments via satellite from the Vatican Jan. 18 after a closing Mass at the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The Mass was celebrated by the pope’s envoy, Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone.

“Today more than ever, there is a need for the witness and public commitment of all Christians to reaffirm the dignity and the unique and irreplaceable value of the family founded on marriage between a man and a woman,” he said.

Christians also need to show that they are open to life at all its stages, he said.

Every Christian must help promote “legislative and administrative measures” that support the traditional family and their “inalienable rights,” he said.

The pope said the family, “founded on indissoluble marriage between a man and a woman, is the expression of this relational, filial and communal aspect of life. It is the setting where men and women are enabled to be born with dignity, and to grow and develop in an integral manner.”

But families’ efforts to be a true school of humanity and perennial values are being hindered by “a deceptive concept of freedom,” the pope said.

This false sense of freedom, he said, glorifies whims and individual impulses “to the point of leaving everyone locked up in the prison of his or her own ‘I.’”

“True human freedom comes from having been created in the image and likeness of God and, therefore, should be exercised with responsibility, always opting for the true good so that it becomes love, the gift of self,” the pope said.

Real love and closeness among family members are needed more than ideals or theories, he added.

It is through one’s concrete experience in the home “that one learns to truly live and value life and health, freedom and peace, justice and truth, work, harmony and respect,” he said.

Pope Benedict also said his prayers were with families who are facing the trials of poverty, illness, isolation and separation because of migration, as well as those families being persecuted for their Christian faith.

He encouraged large families who are oftentimes criticized or not understood by others yet are giving “an example of generosity and faith in God.”

He urged families to pray together, especially the rosary, and to build their faith on listening to the word of God and working to incorporate Gospel values concretely in their lives.

At the end of his speech, the pope announced the next World Meeting of Families would be held in Milan, Italy, in 2012 on the theme “The Family: Work and Play.”
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Low-budget film creates stir among Catholic marriage advocates

BY MARILYN LAMFORD

ROGERS, Ark. (CNS) — The film “Fireproof” is causing a stir in Catholic marriage advocacy groups around the country.

The movie, produced on a $500,000 budget, has become a hit around the country, first appearing in 839 theaters when it was released Sept. 26. As of Oct. 23, the movie had shown in 905 theaters and grossed $21.5 million, more than 40 times its budget. The film was released on DVD Jan. 27.

The Rev. Michael Catt, senior pastor at Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Ga., and executive producer of the film, spoke about the project at an event in Rogers Oct. 16 and in an interview with KDUA radio from St. Vincent de Paul Church in Rogers.

“Fireproof” tells the story of a firefighter and his struggles to save his marriage. A book, “The Love Dare,” which was originally a plot device in the film, was a No. 1 best-seller on The New York Times’ paperback advice books list.

In promoting the film, Rev. Catt said, “We learned — take it to the people. We didn’t have a multi-multimillion-dollar advertising budget. We had grass-roots word of mouth. We are very grateful for the support the Catholic Church has given us.”

“I think anything that can impact marriages is a positive thing,” he added. “If we can save a million marriages this year, the ripple effect on children who will not be from broken homes, who will not be abused, who will not be growing up in homes where Mom and Dad are yelling and screaming, that will have an effect on our culture — it will have an effect on our churches.”

On a related “Fireproof” Web site, www.fireproofmymarriage.com, are links to Catholic marriage resources such as the Archdiocese of Chicago Family Ministries, Retrouvaille, the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ National Pastoral Initiative for Marriage.

According to Frank Hannigan, director of family ministries for the Archdiocese of Chicago, the film has had great popularity in the Catholic community because of its pro-marriage, faith-filled message. “When marriage is under such attack, to have in the popular medium a movie like ‘Fireproof’ was a wonderful gift for us,” he said. “We hope it will be something that will help couples strengthen their marriages.”

Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Ky., chairman of the bishops’ Subcommittee on Marriage and Family Life, endorsed “Fireproof,” saying the film portrayed, in a “convincing and realistic way,... how a married couple was able to honor their marriage in the context of how easy it is today for couples to walk away from this commitment in the midst of incredibly hectic and complicated lives.”

“In the end it is clear that their faith in God is central,” he added. “While this is not a film with a uniquely Catholic theological perspective, I believe that the core message is one that can be profitably received by Catholic married couples and ultimately all married couples.”

The USCCB’s Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children.

Kirk Cameron stars in a scene from the movie “Fireproof.” The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG.
YouTube messages in English, Spanish offer church’s view on marriage

WASHINGTON (CNS) — As U.S. voters from coast to coast prepared to decide ballot questions related to same-sex marriage Nov. 4, the U.S. bishops took their campaign to keep the traditional definition of marriage as the union of a man and woman to a popular video-sharing Web site, YouTube.

A version of the video in English, online at www.youtube.com, features Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Ky., chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ recently created Ad Hoc Committee for the Defense of Marriage.

Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of San Antonio, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, presents the same message in Spanish online at www.youtube.com

Both videos also can viewed on the USCCB Web site at www.usccb.org.

The videos were posted online just before Election Day, when voters in California, Arizona and Florida were to face ballot questions that would define marriage as between one woman and one man.

Connecticut bishops also have asked Catholics in their state to support a constitutional convention proposal on the ballot, so that a recent state decision permitting same-sex marriage there could be reconsidered.

“Certain groups and individuals are trying to make same-sex unions the equivalent of marriage,” the archbishops said in their videos. “This is a false idea being proposed and, in some cases, imposed by a minority. This is nothing less than the radical redefinition of marriage — denying the truth that it is exclusively the union of a man and a woman.”

The messages warn that if successful “this effort of redefining marriage to include same-sex unions will bring confusion to what marriage actually means. This confusion could spread and have enormous legal consequences for the rearing of children, public education, employment and religious freedom.

“Children would be forced to learn that marriage is merely one kind of loving relationship among many,” they said. “Churches would be prevented from witnessing to and teaching about the necessary and singular role of love between a man and a woman.

Source: U.S. Census and The Official Catholic Directory ©2009 CNS

Too Sweet

2.2 million couples marry each year in the U.S.

196,420 couples married in U.S. Catholic churches last year — about 9% of all marriages.

California, Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas have the most number of Catholic marriages

6% of currently married women have been married for at least 50 years.

57% women
60% men

who are 18 or older and married in the U.S.