

World Marriage Sunday Guide

February 14, 2016

Reintroducing Marriage, from the Beginning

We are living in a culture that has forgotten the meaning and purpose of marriage in God's plan for creation.

World Marriage Sunday, always celebrated on the second Sunday in February, and National Marriage Week that precedes it, provide great opportunity to reflect on the reality of marriage and to celebrate marriages in our parish communities. It is particularly important to provide this witness for children who are increasingly bombarded with the notion that marriage is an institution for the happiness of adults separated from children and the family.

Reintroducing the Reality of Marriage.

Marriage is the free choice of a man and woman to make themselves irreplaceable to each other, to become a relative, described in scripture as becoming one flesh. It is this choice that prepares the couple, if so blessed, to receive a child as a gift.¹ In reality, that child is irreplaceable to both the mother and the father, and the mother and father are irreplaceable to the child. The mother and father are part of the identity of the child who carries their flesh for all of eternity as Christians know to be true. Our desire to know and be loved by our own mother and father is an experience of God's plan for creation that is recognized through the reality of marriage. Knowing this universal reality does not depend on belief in God.

Through the benefit of revelation, Catholics have a deeper understanding of this reality, and through Christ, marriage has become a sacrament, an outward sign of a hidden reality.

When the reality of marriage is recognized by culture, religions or the state, it becomes the only institution that unites children with their mother and father.

Suggested Action

1. Support your priests and encourage them to preach about marriage on World Marriage Sunday (See the letter and homily help that Bishop Malone and the USCCB have provided.)
2. Suggest prayers of the faithful to your parish that focus on the truth about marriage and family.
3. Suggest to your pastor to have those men and women who have made themselves irreplaceable to each other through marriage stand, be recognized and receive a special blessing for their marriages. This could be introduced by reading the short description of marriage from above ("Reintroducing the Reality of Marriage").
4. Read and share the attached essays, "Celebration of Marriages in the Community," on the reality of marriage, or "Understating the Marriage 'Commitment'". The first can be read at a marriage recognition event, as a reflection, or as background for a homily. Both are suitable to use for a home ceremony around the dinner table.
5. Essential Elements of Catholic Marriage Vows can be used for reflection by couples wishing to renew their vows or by those considering marriage.

Other resources:

- <http://www.foryourmarriage.org/celebrate-national-marriage-week-usa/>
- <http://wmd.wvme.org/liturgies.html>
- <http://www.nationalmarriageweekusa.org/>



¹ The choice of marriage also prepares the man and woman to receive a child through adoption. Only a man can stand in for the father and only a woman can stand in for the mother that the child has lost.