

2018
Archdiocese of Philadelphia
Office for Clergy
Ongoing Formation for Diocesan Priests

THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE: CONCRETELY APPLIED

Presentation Notes and Summaries

- Talk One **Recreating a Christian Culture for Marriage:**
This Paradigm Shift is the Duty of the Church
- Talk Two **Facing the Issues of Lack of Faith, Cohabitation,
and Indifference with the Hope for Change:**
This is the Work of the Whole Christian Community
- Talk Three **A Catechumenal Approach to Marriage Preparation:**
*Marriage Preparation Needs to be Marked by Conversion
and an Openness to Grace*
- Talk Four **Creative Ways to Provide for Marriage Mystagoga:**
Marriage Preparation is for more than the Wedding Day
- Talk Five **Looking at Marriage in the Service of the Church and Society:**
Relating Marriage to the other Sacraments and the Christian Life

Talk 1: RECREATING A CHRISTIAN CULTURE FOR MARRIAGE

The Paradigm Shift is the Duty of the Church

Adam Dickerson, MA, JCL

Email: aadickerson12@gmail.com

Overview

In the introductory remarks, the clergy receive a brief overview of each of the talks in order to orient the clergy to the direction of the workshop. The emphasis throughout is that this workshop is meant to be one of collaboration. The presenters and the priests both work with the same couples in preparing them for marriage. We want to work together in preparing couples for their lifelong marriage.

The focus of this first talk is twofold. First, the duty to recreate a Christian culture for marriage ought to come from a place of conviction and love, not burden. The very living of a life in Christ ought to be an invitation by priest to couples to live life differently. Couples should be able to see something different about the priest because of his relationship with Christ and that difference should be such that the couple desires the same.

The second part of this presentation asks the clergy to situation himself in today's narrative. The causes for a culture that does not support marriage are numerous and difficult to pinpoint. However, each individual can take ownership for his own narrative. Each can identify how his own life experience and formation has prepared him for his current ministry to married couples. The summary of responses from the marriage and family survey offer a gauge by which the priest can examine his approach to ministry in light of the needs of the couples.

Because we cannot both lament the current situation of marriage in society and continue with business as usual, this talk concludes with some practical suggestions to recreate a Christian culture for marriage.

Overview of Talks

Talk 1 Recreating a Christian Culture for Marriage:

This Paradigm Shift is the Duty of the Church

- Overview of talks 2-5 as a response to challenge of talk 1.
- Briefly touch on where we are at in society.
- Brainstorm next steps.

Talk 2 Facing the Issues of Lack of Faith, Cohabitation,
and Indifference with the Hope for Change:

This is the Work of the Whole Christian Community

- Honest look at the effects these have on the individual, the couple and their marriage.
What is it like to have uncertainty as a part of daily life?
Does cohabitation foster openness and honesty?

Talk 3 A Catechumenal Approach to Marriage Preparation:

Marriage Preparation Needs to be Marked by Conversion
and an Openness to Grace

- The Catechumen spends time (1year+) with instruction, a time of conversion, cultivating a longing for divine life, a longing for the grace of the sacrament to be faithful to it.
- Multi-day might be better than single day but what more can be done... and it does not need to be done by the priest.

Talk 4 Creative Ways to Provide for Marriage Mystagogia:

Marriage Preparation is for more than the Wedding Day.

- Now they are married. Now What?
Particularly difficult when couples marry close to a convenient reception hall.
Build relationship long before wedding day... not just the priest but the parish community.

Talk 5 Looking at Marriage in the Service of the Church and Society:

Relating Marriage to the other Sacraments and the Christian Life

- One of the most frequent questions we are asked is: Why does the marriage have to be in the Church?
No connection between Marriage and Communion in today's culture, which brings us back to talk one.

Main Presentation Notes

RECREATING A CHRISTIAN CULTURE FOR MARRIAGE:

The Paradigm Shift is the Duty of the Church

Let's start with the second half: the duty of the Church for paradigm shift.

Duty of the Church

Important to lay the ground work: Not proposing you do one more thing.

Rather, be who you are and be that well! Be a person who invites people into relationship with Jesus through a life of conviction, a life of joy.

Story of the chaplain going into battle in Mogadishu in 1993.

Can't believe he survived. Then told he needed to go back out. **I need you. I have no one else.** He had to clean out blood from soldier or two from first mission.

Never knew fear like that moment. He knew he was going to die. Few weeks before he got word that his wife was pregnant. Everything inside him said, "Don't go or 10 more body bags."

He started to pray. He recalled Jesus in Gethsemane. "Father if there is any way possible, let this cup pass from me." "Not my will but thy will be done." Jesus got up off his knees, and walked into the hands of enemies to die.

From that moment on God dealt with that fear. Chaplain's life was in God's hand. He had no fear.

Realized one of two things:

1. He gets to go home to his family in Georgia or
2. home to Father in Heaven

That alone gave him the peace to go back.

Lots of blood and bullet holes.

Next morning grown men came to him, crying. Next 24 hours people lined up to ask him about Jesus Christ because they could see the difference that he makes.

Why do I tell you this?

There is a battle to be fought. We need to know what is at stake.

1. We do our part rejuvenating marriage and family life and reap the rewards in parish life (not to mention heaven).
2. We die trying and reap the rewards in heaven.
3. Being lukewarm – not an option.

I like the story of the war and the battle and the courage.

Sarah picked up on the quiet whisper of a line: I need you. I have no one else.

God has been whispering this since ordination day.

So duty comes from a place of conviction not burden.

Duty also comes from a place of love, not burden.

We show a video "What is Love" about a man caring for his wife who has Alzheimer's.

The opening line is: "I don't count it a burden to have to care for her."

He takes care of her every need, everything from the time she gets up until she goes to bed and he says: **It's a privilege.**"

To care for married couples, even their every need, ought to be seen as a privilege, not a burden.

What *might* be asked of you?

The only thing you might find yourself being asked *to do* is to include the Church, include the laity.

If you come away from the workshop feeling like the burden of changing the tide with marriages is on your shoulders, than perhaps we did not do our job.

I am involved in high school administration and just attended a workshop on school shooters.

The nature of looking honestly at a situation may lead to feeling overwhelmed or despair.

Those two presenters struck a balance: yes, things need to be addressed but don't get bogged down in a stack of policies and procedures so thick that they are never read (glad the compilation of surveys for Remain in My Love was only 87 pages!).

Seriously, this is the beauty of Remain in My Love. It is not another policy or program. It is an action, a challenge to reinvigorate. Who is given this challenge? The priests, along with the laity, everyone.

The whole Church of Philadelphia.

Culture for Marriage

You see first-hand how there is not a culture for marriage.

(Hopefully you have families at your parish or place of ministry that you can see firsthand what it means to live out marriage.)

But, generally, culture at large, is not one that supports marriage, either in society as a whole or individual mindsets.

Of course, *socially*: same-sex marriage, cohabitation, contraceptive society, divorce mentality, etc. – lifestyles and activities that have been around almost since the beginning of time but that were never considered moral goods or morally acceptable until most recently.

We are familiar with common *mindsets*:

- I am happy my parents divorced because everyone is much happier now.
- I have my two or three degrees so now I am ready to marry.
People want “the whole package” now rather than growing together in their goals.
- Societal pressure to marry lest people think something is wrong with you.
- Norm to have a child even if not married.
- The wedding or, more, the reception is a rite of passage.

We do not wake up one day in a culture that has this view of marriage.

~~We also do not have the time in 45 minutes to give an historical overview as to how we got here as a society.~~

What is the breakdown of family life and marriage or marriage and family life (which broke down first even!)?

- Invention of pill?
- The American Experiment?
- Protestant Reformation and an attitude of individualism?
- Invention of the car?!

While it may be difficult to pinpoint society as a whole, we can start with our self.

We can begin by asking our own self what our understanding of marriage is. Where did we learn it from? How does that affect my ministry?

- Daughter who sees dad ogling woman; Dad who introduced son to porn at age nine.
- Younger priest from dysfunctional marriage: Can any marriage live to the ideal?
- Older priest who has not experienced such dysfunction: What’s the problem?

What is your *narrative*?

Mine: parents supported each other (law school / business); no cohabitation; no contraception (youngest of 12); high school seminary and St. Charles seminary – observing high school

relationships/dynamics instead of living the experience – all of this allowed for a certain *clarity* that has been beneficial.

Clarity that has led to confidence in the joy, wisdom, richness of the Church's teaching.

In all of this, we realize, we cannot respond with the norm. **We cannot both lament the lack of a culture and continue on with business as usual.**

ENTER "REMAIN IN MY LOVE"

No longer ignore the "consequences of 1. Inadequate catechesis and 2. Lack of personal encounter."

Instead we need to move to a 1. Evangelical and 2. Relational approach.

Example of inadequate catechesis – skipped vows to get to communication.

Example of lack of personal encounter (many levels but pertaining to clergy) – too busy to meet with couples. Does parish staff take care of much of prep.

Six themes repeated in 2017 Surveys:

1. Bold, clear, unequivocal teaching, especially in homilies...
"Many indicated their disappointment with the silence of their parish leaders on these subjects, which they perceive stemming from cowardice or lack of confidence in the truth of the teachings..."
Recently, I came to the conclusion that people truly do not know what the Church teaches about contraception.
Courage does not mean hurling stones.
Marriage prep cannot be the first time people are hearing the church's teaching.
2. Opportunities to form community.
Often engaged couples like what they hear and ask how they can have support back at parishes.
Best we can say is – get involved, create the community.
3. Childcare is a *must* for parish activities.
Didn't realize my parents took turns going to Mass.
Is there a Mass welcoming of families?
4. Sacraments are the greatest gift to marriage.
Increased opportunities for Confession rather than just the Saturday evening option.
One or two of the sites have confession during the lunch and participants make use of this.
5. Availability of priests
Strong portion of surveys expressed gratitude.
Equally strong portion expressed disappointment in lack of availability.
This is a point for examination of conscience. We cannot do the impossible and we need to give according to abilities but priests can also challenge themselves.
6. De-stigmatization of marital problems and marriage counseling

Son of Marine. Counselors for weak people.
What is reaction to colleagues at Vianney Center.
Nobody has arrived, neither priest nor laity.

Paradigm Shift

- Marriage is about relationship with Christ.
Eric's wedding – who is a priest to speak about married love? If love were feelings maybe not but love is a person.
Seminary appeal with no mention of Christ. Do couples hear of Christ when meeting with priest or throughout pre-Cana, not just in spirituality talk?
- Spousal language – e.g., marital embrace.
Covenant: to confuse a covenant with a contract is confuse marriage with prostitution. Marriage is sacrificial and other-centered. Prostitution is a transaction.
Maybe not said this way in a homily but the point is that we should know the words and use them.

Marital embrace: Simple way to identify something more accurately in order to raise the bar.
Renew the vows.
JP II on arousal curves.
- Spend time with the families.
- Recapture the Lord's day and Catholic devotionals.
Lighthouse Media presenter came across a lady who was told by the priest that reciting the rosary was for the uneducated.
- Recognize your own spousal identity.
Primary role is spouse of Church not manager of parish.
Crucifixion Type Love
Can married couples learn about spousal love when they see how you love the Church?
Do they see **sacrifice**?
Seminary mindset: priest sacrifice marriage therefore they have a license to indulge in other areas.
But we do not say husbands sacrifice polygamy so they have a license to indulge in other areas.

"Young people are hungry for love and so we have to talk about it. We have to shout about it."
(Humanum 5)

Discussion

How can we all be part of the paradigm shift to reinvigorate, to empower, couples/families/parishioners?

Conclusion Summary

The common experience at marriage preparation class is that couples are enthralled by what they are hearing, perhaps for the first time. They are equally stimulated by an experience of couples who find joy in living out God's plan for marriage. This cannot be the first and last time that they have such an experience if we want to recreate a culture of marriage. Rather, marriage preparation classes and meeting with the priest can be only one part of a continuum whereby individuals at all phases of life are invited to live out the most primary relationship: a relationship with Jesus.

Practical Next Steps

See six summary points from Remain in My Love [survey](#).

Links

[Story](#) of the chaplain going into battle in Mogadishu in 1993.

[What Love Is](#)

[Crucifixion Type Love](#)

Talk 2: Facing the Issues of Lack of Faith, Cohabitation, Indifference with the Hope for Change
This is the Work of the Whole Christian Community

Megan Murphy - meganmurphyministries.com

To book Megan, contact Tracy Tully at tracy@altusforwomen.com or call 205-478-1837.

Overview

Couples preparing for marriage in today's world face the issues of a lack of faith, cohabitation, and indifference. While recognizing the gravity of these issues so present in our post Christian culture, it is possible to face these issues with hope for change. Lack of faith appears in many forms. Cohabitation is prevalent and believed to be a helpful step in ensuring a happy relationship for the future, though it most often proves to be damaging to the couples' hope for stability, fidelity, and lasting happiness. Relativism and the New Age Movement have certainly led us to a greater attitude of indifference. Although the principle underlying cause of indifference in the Catholic Church is the Domestic and Universal Church's lack of faith in *Humanae Vitae*, and Natural Family Planning.

In view of these considerations, where is the hope? The Church's teaching as expressed in *Humanae Vitae* is true, and Natural Family Planning *works* in *every* sense of the word. In spite of reports to the contrary, NFP is good news! The evidence in support of NFP as a blessing within marriage is overwhelming, even if the couple doesn't feel this is true. When the cross of NFP feels heaviest, God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are doing something very beautiful within the couple, and within their union. Natural Family Planning makes better marriages, sanctifies the couple, deepens their reverence for each other, and deepens their trust in God, His goodness, and His divine design for their lives.

Main Presentation Notes

Lack of Faith - pervasive in our culture. Takes many forms.

- Those who look upon the gospel as fiction, a moral allegory, or mythological story full of moral precepts.
- Those who believe in God, but don't know Him as a loving Father. This can be due to a father wound, such as an abusive, or neglectful father, a father who walked out, or a father who died while the child was very young.
- Those who have been formed by the rules of the Church without the relationship with Jesus Christ, God Our Father, or the Holy Spirit. People walk away because of the absence of Love. (Rules without Relationship = Rebellion)
- Those who practice their faith as a superstition: Don't attend mass but drop off child at CCD to get the sacrament "in case there's a hell."
- Those who have learned the faith from someone who lived it badly. (ie High School teacher who teaches the story of salvation, but lives like an unbeliever, and/or the Christian who says, "God hates homosexuals, fornicators, and women who've had an abortion..." Student walks away from the faith scandalized.

- Those who attend church weekly, try to “follow the rules,” but have no interior life with God. Mother Teresa’s words to her sisters were, “*I fear many of you do not know Jesus.*” (A George Washington/Jesus faith)

- Those who over spiritualize faith: i.e., “*I’m a spiritual person not a religious one.*” Believing this, they deny the reality that they are created *body* and soul, and not just spirit. Often, but not exclusively, they are former Catholics that fall into two groups:

1) Those who, during their religious formation, only experienced the rules, but never experienced a searing personal encounter with Christ, and His Love for them. Some of these enter a 12-step program, where fortunately they come to know God as a personal loving God. However, they never return to the wisdom and beauty of their faith to integrate it into their personal relationship with Him. Some of these rejects integrating their faith with their spirituality, because they do not want the discipline that the “rules” require. (Relationship without Rules = Unruly Undisciplined Persons ruled by their Passions/appetites)

2) Those who practice New Age spirituality- Not created in God’s own image but creating God in their own image. Impotent God if I’ve created him. Then I am the way, the truth, and the life, in place of Christ. These people use superstitious and occult practices to experience the spiritual or supernatural. The focus is on experiencing the supernatural/self-actualization, not growth in communion with God. (self vs other/Christ centered)

Cohabitation - -Statistics from exit evaluations of God’s Plan for a Joy-filled Marriage in Newark N.J. revealed that 62% of couples included in the survey were cohabiting before marriage.

-Dr. Scott Stanley, author and research professor in the department of Psychology at University of Denver, in his TED talk,

[TEDxDenverTeachers.SlidingVersusDeciding.ScottStanleyTalk.mov](https://www.tedxdenver.com/teachers/sliding-versus-deciding-scott-stanley-talk) states:

- “*That of today’s teens, it is expected that 70% will cohabit.*”

- “*Teens believe that the number one thing they can do that will give them better odds in marriage is live with the person before they get married. ...No study has ever shown that, (but) there’s decades of studies that show exactly the opposite.*”

- “*Those who cohabit are at increased risk for things such as: divorce, lower marital satisfaction, problems in communication, problems with finances, and more conflict in marriage.*”

Indifference - How did we get here?

-The Dictatorship of Relativism plays a prominent role, (ie. “*Your truth isn’t my truth.*”)

-New Age philosophy, which does away with the reality of sin and purports that all religions are equal. This philosophy eradicates the need for salvation and therefore, Jesus Christ.

- Rejection of *Humanae Vitae* - ***This is not meant to indict, but to invite!*** If the Church is wrong about NFP and contraception, then it’s entirely possible that it is wrong about cohabitation, fornication, masturbation. (i.e. all sexual morality,) women in the priesthood, etc.

Back to Lack of Faith - Now in regard to the Church’s teaching on Natural Family Planning:

-The good news: The Church’s teaching is true, and NFP works! Here are studies which demonstrate the effectiveness rates of Natural Family Planning:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B03U3jWiOpZuUHIwUnpmdUhyV09MR1ZPX0FWME9mUXZzbjYw/view?usp=sharing>

Some of your parishioners are lying to you when they say, "NFP doesn't work!"

Some of the reasons why couples make this claim:

- They never learned the method properly from a certified instructor. Some have learned the method from a mom or a friend who practiced it, or from a book they read themselves.
- They ever actually manage to fill out their charts for evaluation.
- After learning from a certified instructor, they never completed the follow up practicum which involves turning in charts on a monthly basis to their instructor (usually first six months) for evaluation.
- They enjoyed another glass of wine, which changed their capacity to practice abstinence.

Why NFP does work even when it doesn't!

- Why do some couples experience an inability to turn in charts or turn down that additional glass of wine? Because God has ordained that child's existence from the beginning. (Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you- Jeremiah 1:5,) This particular child is meant to impact that couple's life in a most profound, transcendent way. The couple's job is to ensure they get that child to their dinner table! Sometimes the couple needs a little help from above. And so, God withholds the grace to chart, or to turn in charts, or to abstain. God uses everything for our good, even our weaknesses. God will use even our lack of discipline over our appetites to bring about the gift of another child, who will sanctify the couple.
- Couples who claim NFP doesn't work because of an unintended pregnancy need to reconnect with the transcendent, with the wonder and awe of God's divine design for their lives. Some couples practice excess control in their lives in order to hold on to selfish pleasures: "my time, my money, my schedule, etc." They need help to recognize that they can't be happy without the child God intended, but that they may not have intended!
- Rejection of NFP is rejection of the cross. Christ did not commission us to pick up our keg/cake and follow Him (oh, how easy!), but to pick up our cross and follow Him. *NFP is difficult, but it is noble and beautiful!*
- NFP requires patience. "Love is Patient." 1 Corinthians 13:4. Patience in Greek means long suffering.
- Overtime, NFP roots out the selfish "sting" of lust.
- NFP fosters reverence in the couple for God's design and for one another. It works with the nature of the human person and not against it.
- NFP safeguards the marriage - with only a 3% divorce rate in comparison with the average rate of divorce which is 45-50%.
- NFP safeguards the couple's wedding vows enabling them to be a ***free, total, faithful, and fruitful*** gift of self. How?

Freedom - Because NFP requires abstinence, it enables couples to overcome a run amok sexual appetite through the practice of self-denial. Continual practice of a cyclical period of abstinence builds freedom from the slavery of an undisciplined sexual appetite and compulsive sexual behavior. It also fosters dependence on God and the sacrament of confession. However, the couple must be sincere in their willingness to overcome a disordered sexual appetite, which may be afflicting one or both spouses in the marriage.

Totality - NFP upholds the total gift of self within the act of intercourse. Contraception, in all of its forms, denies it. When the couple engages in intercourse while using contraception, they are withholding the very thing that makes them like God in their capacity to co-create with Him, which is, their fertility. Here's how:

Condom use by the husband means that he is intentionally withholding his fertility from his wife during the act of intercourse. He is not a total self-gift. In the case of oral contraception (commonly called birth control) or barrier methods, the wife intentionally withholds her fertility from her husband during the act of intercourse. She is not a total self-gift. Consequently, they violate their promise of totality in the most "particular expression" of self-gift within marriage.

This has devastating consequences in the marriage because it places restrictions and reservations at the heart of the union (intercourse.) Violating/canceling out total self-gift of the spouses impacts their communion of persons both spiritually and temporally. Conversely, NFP safeguards and preserves totality of gift between the spouses. When the couple uses NFP to try to achieve a pregnancy, they are cooperating with the woman's naturally occurring and God-given fertile phase to try to conceive a child. They are a total self-gift to each other. When, for serious reasons, they are using NFP to postpone or avoid conception, they abstain during the woman's fertile phase, practicing love that is patient. They do not intentionally withhold fertility from each other, but rather wait for God to render the wife infertile. When they come together in the act of intercourse during her infertile phase, it is God who withholds the woman's fertility, not the couple.

This too has consequences within the marriage, but only consequences which actually bless the couple's union profoundly, and in a particular way, during the communion of persons expressed through intercourse. Then, the words of their wedding vows become flesh as the couple give themselves to each other "without reservation." Consequently all of their acts of total self-gift in intercourse actually incarnate the words of their wedding vows, (renew their wedding vows,) thus pouring God's grace out upon the couple and their union.

Fidelity - NFP guards against divorce. NFP users have only a 3% divorce rate.

Fruitfulness - NFP enables the couple's love to remain open to life. With NFP, the couple does nothing to intentionally sterilize an act that is, by its very nature, designed to be fertile and fruitful.

In the practice of NFP, it is God who renders the woman infertile, not the husband or wife. In fact, the couple honors God by reverencing their fertility by either using it and welcoming the possibility of a child, or by abstaining during the fertile phase of the woman for serious reasons to postpone or avoid conception. This leads to reverence for each other. (1 Cor 13:4)

*What if their reasons aren't really **serious** enough?* - God beautifully uses their practice of abstinence to purify/sanctify the couple, their intentions, their desires, and their longing for one another, because of their good will in trying to follow His law. Conversion happens!

*What about **contraception**?* -Through condom use, withdrawal, oral contraceptives, (birth control pills,) contraceptive patches, and shots, the couple intentionally sterilizes a fertile act, thus violating openness to life. *In fact, all sexual acts which the Church teaches are contrary to the good of the person, the union, and natural law have this one thing in common: They are intentionally sterilized acts of sexual pleasure* which, in their methodology, reject/deny participation in God's divine design for human sexuality. A design which includes both communion of persons, (aka bonding,) and filling the heavens with His children (aka babies - openness to life.)

The Language of the Body - A final note - No one thinks the person throwing the middle finger while driving is offering a gesture of friendship or affection. No one confuses it with an invitation to go for coffee. Why? *Because the body speaks a language.*

Sexual intercourse speaks a language with the body. Sexual union (intercourse) communicates the free, total, faithful, and fruitful self-gift of wedding vows according to covenant. The use of contraception violates those vows, while the practice of Natural Family Planning upholds and safeguards the couple's wedding vows, in accordance with God's plan.

Natural Family Planning speaks truth with the body, which leads to the good of the couple and a more beautiful marital union!

Check out these true, good, and beautiful resources on marriage and family life:

The six-video series on marriage at Ecce Humanum:

<http://www.eccefilms.com/humanum/>

The CanaVox small reading group materials, which include suggested videos, articles, and books:

<http://archphila.org/canavox/>

Talk 3: A Catechumenal Approach to Marriage Preparation

Marriage Preparation Needs to be Marked by Conversion and an Openness to Grace

Presenter

Bill Donaghy

Curriculum Specialist, Theology of the Body Institute, www.tobinstitute.org

Email: billdonaghy@me.com, @TOBINstitute, @BillDonaghy

Overview

This presentation focuses on the reality of marriage as a school of holiness in which a person may be transformed by grace and the mutual help of their spouse. We look at the modern broken view of this covenant into more of a contracted agreement, and the deeply impersonal, temporary and consumer-oriented mentality that surrounds that paradigm.

The Church has so much beauty to offer the culture here! The reality of God's spousal love for humanity, for every individual, "sings" through the sign of marital love and family. The joys and the crosses experienced there pull one out of self and invite one into a paradigm of self-giving love and life. As Pope Francis wrote in *Amoris Laetitia*, "Sexual union, lovingly experienced and sanctified by the sacrament, is in turn a path of growth in the life of grace for the couple. It is the 'nuptial mystery'." (AL, 74)

Main Presentation Notes - Source Quotes:

Starting from the *known* and moving to the *new*:

"Marriage, in what is evidently its most popular version, is now on the one hand an intimate 'relationship' involving (ideally) two successful careerists in the same bed... and on the other hand a sort of private political system in which rights and interests must be constantly asserted and defended. Marriage, in other words, has now taken the form of divorce: a prolonged and impassioned negotiation as to how things shall be divided." - Wendell Berry

"But in the beginning, it was not so..." St. John Paul II in the *Theology of the Body* writes that "The visible sign of marriage 'in the beginning' transposes the eternal plan of love into the 'historical' dimension." -St. John Paul II, TOB 95:7

There is something bigger than just "the two of us" or simply a kind of recognized union of lovers in marriage. It is *cosmic*. It is *sacramental*. Marriage contains something of the Divine Mystery since the foundation of the world.

"The Gospel of the family spans the history of the world, from the creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of God... to the fulfillment of the mystery of the covenant in Christ at the end of time with the marriage of the Lamb". -Pope Francis, *Joy of Love*, 63

So, we approach this mystery with wonder and simplicity, and a wide net...

"I don't think the first form of evangelization is to proclaim Jesus. The first evangelization consists in offering everyone a place where they can laugh, dance, celebrate and experience a sense of belonging... Joy comes from feeling you belong to a community, from being happy together, from no longer being alone. The greatest means of evangelization we have today is small communities where there are happy, joyful people who care for one another."

- Jean Vanier (Van-yay), Founder of L'Arche

St. John Paul II began evangelizing with young people by forming *Srodowiskos*, meaning little "nests" or "cultures." The deepest questions were asked and pondered in the midst of creation; about desire and attraction, prayer and purpose, man and woman and the vocation we share to love.

Truths were discovered about marriage and family and human life in general.

"Marriage... is the laboratory for learning to love. It's the school for learning sacrifice. It's the university for learning unselfishness. If you are married, the number one tool God uses to shape you is your spouse!" Pastor Rick Warren

"Love is the very process of passing over, of transformation, of stepping outside the limitations of fallen humanity... into an infinite otherness." -Pope Benedict XVI

We must engage hearts at this deeper, reflective, existential level.

"It is an illusion to think we can build a true culture of human life if we do not ... accept and experience sexuality and love and the whole of life according to their true meaning and their close interconnection." - St. John Paul II, EV, 97

Going back in order to move forward, St. John Paul II invites us to ponder our original experiences in the Theology of the Body:

+Original Solitude - In this experience Adam realized he was "alone" as a person in the visible universe, and different from the animals, as we must too. We are self-aware and self-determining. Knowing this we feel the call to love and so...

+Original Unity - We all remade for relationship and for communion. "'Masculinity' and 'femininity' are distinct, yet at the same time they complete and explain each other." (St. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 25)

+Original Nakedness - This is the vulnerability and transparency that allowed the first man and woman to truly see one another and at the same time to *know* the plan of God for a union and communion that would bring forth new life in His image. Today this "nakedness" must be present in the life of all, as a kind of emotional and spiritual transparency and vulnerability that can lead to communion and life in the Spirit!

We are Significant. Every person is a sign of the Divine. So long as God shines through the sign, spouses will remain on that catechumenal path of conversion and of grace.

HUMANUM: Whatever I do in my marriage has a ripple effect, it goes around and round. Marriage is your own project for the world.

Conclusion Summary

Practical Next Steps

Begin a committed study of St. John Paul II's Letter to Families, Pope Francis's Joy of Love and the theology of the body. These works are not for scholars only but the whole Church.

(Optional) Appendix: Recommended Links

Watch and reflect on the beautiful truths revealed in the Humanum Series:

<http://www.eccefilms.com/humanum/>

Books on the TOB

The Theology of the Body Made Simple, Fr. Anthony Percy

<http://www.amazon.com/Theology-Body-Simple-Anthony-Percy/dp/0819874191>

Men and Women are from Eden, Mary Healy

http://www.amazon.com/Men-And-Women-From-Eden-ebook/dp/B00596VFIG/ref=dp_kinw_strp_1

Theology of the Body for Beginners, Christopher West: <http://a.co/ONGa8Ji>

Good News About Sex & Marriage (Revised Edition): Answers to Your Honest Questions about Catholic Teaching, English version: <http://www.amazon.com/Good-AboutMarriage-Revised-Edition/dp/0867166193>

Talk 4: Creative Ways to Provide for Marriage Mystagogia

Marriage Preparation is for more than the Wedding Day

Damon Owens

Executive Director, joytob www.joytob.org

Email: damon@joytob.org

Overview

Mystagogy, “interpretation of mystery”, is a reference to the *Mystagogical Catechesis* of the early Church for the newly baptized (“neophyte”) believers during the days immediately following Easter. Its purpose was to deepen their understanding of the significance of various rituals, signs, symbols that they experienced in their Sacrament. Contrasted with their pre-Sacramental preparation focusing on the “what”, this post-Sacramental catechesis explored the rituals, metaphors, images, and stories to reveal their deeper significance.

Following the recent reintroduction of mystagogy as the final period of RCIA instruction, we explore what might be possible in the realm of the Sacrament of Matrimony. Recently, Pope Francis proposed exploring a renewal of marriage preparation with a catechumenal approach (see Talk 3 above) and we the Archdiocese of Philadelphia are responding with the *Remain in My Love* initiative.

Similarly, our exploration of applying mystagogy to the Sacrament of Matrimony will include a complementary focus on the time *after* the wedding rite to help the newly married deepen their understanding of the mystery they have entered into and propel them more zealously to live their call to holiness in marriage, family, and parish life. There are many real logistical and situational challenges to making such a renewal, but they are far outweighed by the potential benefits.

The main goals of developing a contemporary marriage mystagogia are to strengthen faithful married life in a time of decline, encourage renewal within family life and among families, and develop natural integration of newly married couples into the parish community.

Main Presentation (full PowerPoint: <http://bit.ly/priest4pptx>)

Mystagogy – “interpretation of mystery”

Origin in the Early Church

- Early Church: Mystagogical Catechesis (*Katecheseis Mystagogikai*) referred to the postbaptismal catechesis of neophytes (5-7 days during Easter week)
- Enable neophytes to draw a new sense of the Faith, Church, world
- Why?: Explain the significance of various rituals, signs, symbols that they experienced in their Sacrament
- In contrast to more didactic preparatory catechesis on the “what”

Renewal in the Contemporary Church

- Final period of the initiation of adults in RCIA (circa 1970)
- Newly baptized from Easter are now in a period of mystagogia!
- Explain the meaning of the Sacraments after experiencing them
- No specific ceremonies, but neophytes
 - Maintain a special place among the faithful
 - Mentioned in the homily
 - Prayed for in General Intercessions

Major Elements and Purposes

- The families, witnesses, sponsors, entire parish share in it
- However, main responsibility falls on the “mystagogue” – usually the priest or deacon – to open up the mysteries of faith
- Post-Sacramental catechesis explores rituals, metaphors, symbols, images, and stories to reveal the deeper significance from...
 - Visible to the invisible
 - Sign to the Reality
 - Sacrament to the Mystery

Applying to the Sacrament of Matrimony

- Requires active participation of not only newly married and priest, but of the whole parish
- Incorporates newly married into the community: Belonging
- Deepen and enrich their own experience by a clear exposition of the inner meaning
 - For their own lives
 - For the Church
 - For their role in the actual community life of the Church

Marriage and Family Survey Summary: What are believers asking from the Church?

- Bold, clear, unequivocal teaching, especially in homilies
- Opportunities to form communities
- Childcare is a must for parish activities
- The Sacraments are the greatest gift to a marriage
- Availability of Priests
- Destigmatization of marital problems and marriage counseling

Full responses available at <http://archphila.org/remain2018/>

Discussion

- How do we engage couples who are not from our or perhaps any parish?
- What if they don't show up after the wedding or honeymoon?
- Who are the right couples in the parish who can engage, accompany, befriend, and mentor the newly married couples? How do we identify, invite and prepare them?

- How do we engage the whole parish in our weddings when they usually happen on Friday or Saturday? What about incorporating parish weddings into the Sunday masses?
- How do we encourage and facilitate fellowship between the parish and the engaged/newly married couples?
- What if the new initiative is perceived as “too much” by the couples who just want to get married on their own terms?

Interesting Ideas and Comments

- This could provide an opportunity for deeper engagement with parish life for both the newly married AND current parishioners who are not actively involved
- Commitment by mentor couples could (should?) be simple, clear, and attractive
- There will be outlier engaged couples who logistically cannot engage in the parish, but the new focus will reset the parish expectation that all marriages involve the parish
- Incorporating weddings into the weekend Masses will have difficulties, but major impact on building community
- Introducing and explaining the whole parish marriage program to new couples must be presented in a “melody” of excitement, friendship, mutual benefit, and welcome
- Couple to couple friendships are the heart of engaging newly married couples into parish life

Conclusion Summary

Coordinated with a refocused catechumenal approach to marriage preparation, a post-wedding time of engagement with newly married couples will provide an opportunity for marriage, family, and vitality for the entire parish. There will be challenges creating a model due to the unique differences of marriage, marriage ministry, and the resources currently available. A measured, progressive approach (vs all or nothing) will likely serve to address challenges over time versus all at once, however, excitement and buy-in around the vision of building community through deeper invitational engagement of newly married couples is crucial to establish early.

Talk 5: Looking at Marriage in the Service of the Church and Society

Relating Marriage to the Other Sacraments and the Christian Life

Presenter

Bill Donaghy

Curriculum Specialist, Theology of the Body Institute, www.tobinstitute.org

Email: billdonaghy@me.com, @TOBINstitute, @BillDonaghy)

Overview

As the opening quote from St. John Chrysostom reveals, marriage “is the force that welds society together.” This talk will unfold the Great Mystery contained in Ephesians 5 that connects the sign of the one flesh union in earthly marriage to the redeeming love of Christ and the Church. Living the total gift of self in marriage and family can be the beacon that guides civic life, love of neighbor, service in all its forms.

The sign of spousal love will be seen as the watermark behind all of the sacraments, as the Catechism teaches. So, the life of the liturgy too is caught up in this Great Mystery. The call for married couples to live in some sense “eucharistically” will be the antidote then to the self-defeating belittling of marriage in today’s culture. The talk will close pondering the provocative words of Pope Francis that the “dynamics of the relationship between God, man and woman, and their children, are the golden key to understand the world and history, with all that they contain...”

Main Presentation Notes - Source Quotes:

"The love of husband and wife is the force that welds society together." -St. John Chrysostom

"The family is the great mystery of God." -St. John Paul II

“‘For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church” -St. Paul, Ephesians 5:31-32

The mystery spoken of in Ephesians 5 “is ‘great’ indeed: as God’s salvific plan for humanity, that mystery is in some sense the central theme of the whole of revelation, its central reality. It is what God... wishes above all to transmit to mankind in his Word” -St. John Paul II, TOB 93:2

Jesus came to restore creation to the purity of its origins -CCC #2336

“Christianity is God's marriage proposal to the soul.” - Dr. Peter Kreeft

"God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and

responsibility, of love and communion. Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being." -St. John Paul II, FC 11 Marriage/Family Life is a Saint-Making Machine

Marriage "has arisen from redemption in the form... of a 'prototype'... If we reflect deeply on this dimension, we have to conclude that all the sacraments of the New Covenant find their prototype in some way in marriage" -St. John Paul II, TOB 98:2

"The entire Christian life bears the mark of the spousal love of Christ and the Church. Already Baptism... is a nuptial mystery; it is so to speak the nuptial bath which precedes the wedding feast, the Eucharist." -CCC, 1617

"Gift expresses the essential truth of the human person." -Pascal Ide

"In the Eucharist a communion takes place that corresponds to the union of man and woman in marriage." - Pope Benedict XVI, The Spirit of the Liturgy

"The Eucharist is the Sacrament of the Bridegroom and the Bride... in instituting the Eucharist... (Jesus) wished to express the relationship between man and woman, between what is 'feminine' and what is 'masculine.'" -St. John Paul II, MD, 26 We must live *eucharistically*. "This is my body given up for you." "Be it done unto me according to your word."

"The dynamics of the relationship between God, man and woman, and their children, are the golden key to understand the world and history, with all that they contain...Pope Francis

The history of mankind, the history of salvation, passes by way of the family... The family is placed at the center of the great struggle between good and evil, between life and death, between love and all that is opposed to love. -Pope John Paul II

Practical Next Steps

Begin a committed study of St. John Paul II's Letter to Families, Pope Francis's Joy of Love and the theology of the body. These works are not for scholars only but the whole Church.

(Optional) Appendix: Recommended Links

Watch and reflect on the beautiful truths revealed in the Humanum Series:
<http://www.eccfilms.com/humanum/>

Books on the TOB

The Theology of the Body Made Simple, Fr. Anthony Percy

<http://www.amazon.com/Theology-Body-Simple-Anthony-Percy/dp/0819874191>

Men and Women are from Eden, Mary Healy

http://www.amazon.com/Men-And-Women-From-Eden-ebook/dp/B00596VFIG/ref=dp_kinw_strp_1

Theology of the Body for Beginners, Christopher West: <http://a.co/ONGa8Ji>

Good News About Sex & Marriage (Revised Edition): Answers to Your Honest Questions about Catholic Teaching, English version

<http://www.amazon.com/Good-About-Marriage-Revised-Edition/dp/0867166193>

"Fill These Hearts" by Christopher West

http://www.amazon.com/gp/aw/d/0307987132/ref=redir_mdp_mobile

"Men, Women, and the Mystery of Love: Practical Insights from John Paul II's Love and Responsibility by Dr. Ed Sri

[https://www.amazon.com/Men-Women-Mystery-Love-](https://www.amazon.com/Men-Women-Mystery-Love-Responsibility/dp/0867168404/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1484530509&sr=8-2&keywords=Men+women+and+the+mystery+of+love+Sri)

[Responsibility/dp/0867168404/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1484530509&sr=8-2&keywords=Men+women+and+the+mystery+of+love+Sri](https://www.amazon.com/Men-Women-Mystery-Love-Responsibility/dp/0867168404/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1484530509&sr=8-2&keywords=Men+women+and+the+mystery+of+love+Sri)

Called to Love: Approaching John Paul II's Theology of the Body by Carl Anderson, Jose Granados

[http://www.amazon.com/Called-Love-Approaching-John-Theology-](http://www.amazon.com/Called-Love-Approaching-John-Theology-ebook/dp/B0026772FQ/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1458144740&sr=1-1&keywords=granados+theology)

[ebook/dp/B0026772FQ/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1458144740&sr=1-1&keywords=granados+theology](http://www.amazon.com/Called-Love-Approaching-John-Theology-ebook/dp/B0026772FQ/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1458144740&sr=1-1&keywords=granados+theology)

These Beautiful Bones: An Everyday Theology of the Body, Emily Simpson

<http://www.emilysimpson.com/these-beautiful-bones-an-everyday-theology-of-thebody.html>

Theology of the Body: Some Thoughts and Reflections by Karen Doyle

<https://www.amazon.com/Theology-Body-Some-Thoughts-Reflections/dp/0819874272>

Monsignor Brian Bransfield's excellent book "The Human Person According to John Paul II"

http://www.amazon.com/Human-Person-According-John-Paul/dp/0819833940/ref=asap_bc?ie=UTF8

William May's "Theology of the Body in Context"

http://www.amazon.com/Theology-Body-Context-Genesis-Growth/dp/0819874310/ref=asap_bc?ie=UTF8

Theology of the Body, Extended: The Spiritual Signs of Birth, Impairment and Dying by Susan Windley-Daoust

http://www.amazon.com/Theology-Body-Extended-Spiritual-Impairment/dp/0989839753/ref=asap_bc?ie=UTF8

Theology of the Body Rosary Meditations by Debbie Staresinic <http://www.tobrosary.com>

At the Heart of the Gospel: Reclaiming the Body for the New Evangelization by Christopher West <http://a.co/0mMn9hz>