

Made for Life: Parish Night Outline

This parish night outline is provided as a suggested framework for use by clergy or pastoral leaders in facilitating group conversation of the themes from the USCCB's *Marriage Unique for a Reason* video "Made for Life."

1. Introduction

Write this quotation on the board before participants arrive. It will serve as a conversation-starter.

"A child does not come from outside as something added on to the mutual love of spouses, but springs from the very heart of that mutual giving, as its fruit and fulfillment."
- CCC, no. 2366

Once you have roughly the number of people that you expected at the gathering, ask them to introduce themselves to the people they are sitting near, and to discuss the quote with one another. Ask them about the word "fruit" and what it signifies. It is a word the Church uses often (e.g. "and blessed be the fruit of your womb, Jesus") but is rarely used in normal conversation. Give this about five minutes.

2. Preliminary Discussion Question

Ask participants to consider the following question: How has changing the definition of legal marriage in America also changed the way we understand the link between marriage and children? Give the participants some time to talk with one or two people near them about this, then ask someone to share their thoughts. (Let this person know in advance, if possible, that you will be seeking their feedback first). Allow a free discussion to follow. If there are not many comments, you may want to offer your own observations.

3. View *Made for Life* (10 minutes)

4. Post-Viewing Discussion

These are three main points to frame your discussion:

1. Children are a gift
2. Fathers and mothers matter for children
3. New life comes only through sexual difference

Firstly, you may ask participants to consider how to understand children as a gift as opposed to a right or a burden. Consider why this is not always a person's immediate understanding (such as in cases where an unmarried woman discovers that she is pregnant or when parents already feel over-burdened) and ask the participants how they would explain the "gift-ness" of a child to someone who does not understand it.

Next, spend some time with a bit of storytelling. Ask participants to think of two stories

about their own childhood or of an incident that they have witnessed that showed the different love that comes from a father and a mother. For example, perhaps a woman in the group will have had a mother who coached her soccer team, or a father who took her on scouting trips, and she can talk about how each of these activities demonstrated in some way that her parents gave her love in different ways. Usually people feel a particular closeness to one parent or the other, and this may be an interesting element for discussion as well.

Finally, how is the sameness and difference of man and woman *essential* to becoming and being parents (i.e. without sexual difference, they can't be the child's parents, even if the law says so)? And if it is essential to the conception of a child, does it make sense that sexual difference would also be essential to the raising of the child?

5. Other questions or comments

If they ask, the couples in this video are real couples and unscripted.