

*Resource Booklet*

PRIESTS

DEACONS

CATECHISTS

TEACHERS



# Made For Life

A CATECHETICAL AND EDUCATIONAL AID ON  
THE GIFT OF CHILDREN AND THE INDISPENSABLE PLACE  
OF FATHERS AND MOTHERS IN MARRIAGE AND SOCIETY



**MARRIAGE**  
*Unique for a Reason*



#### ABOUT THE ART

*Saints Joachim and Anne are the father and mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary is the fruit of their marriage. By a singular grace of God in view of the merits of Jesus, she was preserved from all stain of Original Sin from the moment of her conception. Thus it is in the context of married life and conjugal love that Mary is prepared to receive the Divine Logos, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus is the Logos, the "Reason" at the heart of all reason and truth, including the truth of marriage. The marriage between Joachim and Anne is a significant witness to why marriage is "unique for a reason."*

The Ad Hoc Committee for the Defense of Marriage is grateful to the artist Rev. Marko Rupnik for the use of this image.

# Made For Life

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*A Resource Booklet for  
Priests, Deacons, Catechists, and Teachers*





# **MARRIAGE**

*Unique for a Reason*



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

## MARRIAGE: UNIQUE FOR A REASON

The *Made for Life* Resource Booklet for Priests, Deacons, Catechists, and Teachers was developed as a resource by the Ad Hoc Committee for the Defense of Marriage of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). It was reviewed by the committee chairman, Bishop Salvatore J. Cordileone, and has been authorized for publication by the undersigned.

Msgr. David J. Malloy, STD  
General Secretary, USCCB

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*This material is intended as a catechetical and educational aid to be used as a resource by a priest, deacon, catechist, or teacher. The video, viewer's guide, and resource booklet form an integrated whole, and as such, complete the proper context of this tool.*

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## How to Use This Resource Booklet

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This Resource Booklet is a supplement to the Viewer's Guide, which accompanies the video *Made for Life*, the second video in the *Marriage: Unique for a Reason* series. The purpose of the Resource Booklet is to assist priests, deacons, catechists, teachers, and others who proclaim and hand on the truth about marriage and the family.

After the **Introduction**, which sets the stage for the subsequent reflections on marriage, there is a list of **Talking Points**. These provide a summary of the Resource Booklet's main points.

Each **main section** of the Resource Booklet begins with a quote from the video *Made for Life* and a list of key topics related to the quote. The body of the text explores the meaning of the quote and fleshes out the key topics.

The **Handing It On** sections extend the discussion of marriage found in the main sections by supplying additional depth of analysis or by addressing common contemporary challenges to marriage. These sections also offer concrete advice on how to effectively communicate the Church's teaching on marriage as part of the New Evangelization.

The **Feature Topics** connect the Church's teaching on marriage with her teaching on other topics.

Because the text of the Resource Booklet is cumulative (that is, each section builds on the previous section), we recommend reading it in order. However, if you are interested in information on one particular topic, please consult the **Table of Contents**.

Finally, the sources cited in the Resource Booklet's **endnotes** provide many avenues to explore further the Church's rich teaching on marriage.



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## Introduction

*By its very nature the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of [children] and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory... Indeed children are the supreme gift of marriage and greatly contribute to the good of the parents themselves.*

– Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), no. 48 and 50<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the history of the world, across the expanse of societies and cultures, marriage has been understood and protected as the original, primary, and most fundamental pro-child institution. Marriage and children are inextricably linked, because marriage is the life-giving union between one man and one woman. By its very nature and definition —its core meaning— marriage is ordered to the gift of life and to stewardship of that gift. Indeed, marriage is for the good of the spouses, that is, husband and wife. But marriage is also for the good of children. In fact, it is essentially ordered to the procreation and education of children.<sup>2</sup> A child is always a supreme gift who deserves the love of both a mother and a father.

Some today have questioned the meaning of marriage as a pro-child institution because they question marriage as the permanent, exclusive, and

fruitful bond of one man and one woman. The painful experiences of broken families and divorce have contributed to this questioning, as well as the easing of divorce laws, which have put children more and more into the background. The propaganda of the sexual revolution, fostered by the availability of contraception, spread the myth that sex has no consequences.<sup>3</sup> Couples are thus tempted to replace genuine spousal love with a “contraceptive mentality,”<sup>4</sup> and children sadly become seen as “mistakes” or even “intruders.” The modern ideology that sex has no consequences has furthered the casual acceptance of pre- or nonmarital sexual activity (e.g., fornication and adultery), often found in the phenomenon of cohabitation, and has contributed to the epidemic of pornography addiction and its tragic costs.

In normalizing contraception, the sexual revolution first promised us sex without babies.<sup>5</sup> As a consequence of this attempted separation, it has now given us babies without sex. The various forms of illicit reproductive technologies<sup>6</sup> have given us a dizzying array of bioethical dilemmas. In addition to the scourge of abortion,<sup>7</sup> which has scarred the hearts of many, efforts to bring a child into the world apart from the loving embrace of their father and mother have led to a false understanding of the child as “a lifestyle choice, a commodity to which all consumers are entitled,”<sup>8</sup> rather than a human person—a gift—with inviolable human dignity and inalienable rights.<sup>9</sup>

More recently, the drastic proposal to “redefine” the very meaning of marriage itself to include two persons of the same sex has brought all of these questions to a precipice.<sup>10</sup> The proposal to redefine marriage radically separates marriage from children *by definition* because it claims that the

sexual difference of man to woman and woman to man—which makes possible a union that is life-giving—is irrelevant to the meaning of marriage. It asserts instead that marriage and children have no intrinsic relationship with each other. Furthermore, this proposal to redefine marriage holds that mothers and fathers can be replaced or dispensed with. Parenting itself, that is, mothering and fathering, is therefore deconstructed.

As our culture's understanding of marriage reduces it to a mere bond of affection,<sup>11</sup> not only does marriage lose its rationale, but sexual difference and the procreation of children also come to be seen as ultimately extraneous to its basic meaning. The possibility of “conceiving” children outside of the conjugal act only increases the divide between married love and children and provokes the questions of whether marriage, conception, and the raising of children really go together, and why they are proper only to a man and a woman united in marriage as husband and wife. The *Made for Life* DVD, Viewer's Guide, and Resource Booklet serve to assist in answering these questions.

This Resource Booklet is a supplement to the Viewer's Guide, which accompanies the video entitled *Made for Life*, the second video in the *Marriage: Unique for a Reason* series. The first video, *Made for Each Other*, examined the meaning of sexual difference and complementarity between man and woman and why male-female sexual difference is essential to marriage. The second video, *Made for Life*, explores another essential aspect of marriage, one that is built on the foundation of sexual difference: openness to the gift of a child, as well as the indispensable place of mothers and fathers. Understanding how a man and a woman are “made for each other” is the necessary starting point for understanding how marriage is “made

for life.” Sexual difference between husband and wife is crucial here. Men and women matter not only for the beginning of a child’s life, but also for his or her fullest development. In *Made for Life*, real married couples discuss the gift of children and the importance of fathers and mothers.

This Resource Booklet is intended to assist priests, deacons, catechists, teachers, and others in their service of proclaiming and handing on the truth about marriage and the family and why marriage can only be between one man and one woman. Like the first *Made for Each Other* Resource Booklet, the present booklet does not presume to offer a pedagogy or replace the critical role of the catechist. However, it is hoped that the reflections in this booklet will assist those who might preach and teach on this topic, as well as those who share the video and Viewer’s Guides in a group or class setting. The “Handing It On” sections have been included to stimulate further consideration about specific themes related to sharing the truth about marriage.

For more information and further resources, including access to other videos in the series, go to [www.marriageuniqueforareason.org](http://www.marriageuniqueforareason.org).

### Key talking points related to this booklet:

1. Marriage is the most important pro-child institution on the planet. It is essentially pro-child *because* it is the union of a man and a woman.
2. Married love is life-giving. Openness to life is fundamental to every marriage. A husband and a wife’s total gift of self involves being open to the gift of a child. “Re-defining” marriage ignores marriage’s service to life.

3. A child is a gift, not a product or a trophy. No one has a “right” to a child, but husband and wife are called to lovingly receive children from the Lord.
4. *The child is the answer.* In the face of difficulties today, the child remains a sign of hope and joy for the world. Jesus himself holds up the child as an essential reference point for Christian discipleship.
5. Even husbands and wives who are not blessed with children still form a total communion of persons, and still are called to be fruitful and generously loving.
6. Adoption is a generous witness to the gift of a child. It takes its form from the natural generation of children, in response to a family crisis or tragedy.
7. Single parents, who often demonstrate heroic sacrifice and dedication, keep “space” open for the importance of sexual difference and the complementarity of fathers and mothers. There is a difference between becoming a single parent for nondeliberate reasons and deliberately depriving a child of his or her mother and father.
8. Parenting is not gender-neutral. Parenting is fathering and mothering. Only a man can be a father; only a woman can be a mother.
9. A child has a right—a basic right—to come from and be raised in the loving marital union of his or her mother and father. Society and the state have a vested interest in protecting the true meaning of marriage, the gift of children, and the indispensable place of mothers and fathers.
10. Sexual difference matters not only for the conception of a child, but also for a child’s formation and education. Marriage, the union of husband and wife, is “pro-diversity”; it preserves the unique and diverse love that only a mother and a father can give to their children.

## Children Are a Gift

**1. "Being open to children is so foundational.  
When you're open to children, you're not just opening yourself  
to the possibility of the gift of life, but you're [also]  
opening yourself up to your spouse."**

[00:23]

**Key topics:** OPENNESS TO LIFE; LOVE AND LIFE ARE INSEPARABLE

Marriage is made for life (see Gn 1:27-28).<sup>12</sup> It is made to be open to the gift of the child and to serve life in manifold ways. No other human institution on the face of the planet has been naturally made to serve the purposes for which marriage has been designed—the union of a man and a woman as the basis of the family, a union ordered to the spouses' good and to the procreation and education of children.<sup>13</sup>

Love and life are built into the very essence of marriage. In fact, *love and life are inseparable*. Authentic spousal love is always open to the gift of the other and the gift of life, and openness to life manifests true spousal love.<sup>14</sup> Being open to receiving the gift of a child is not arbitrary or extrinsic to marriage. It's not an extra. It's what marriage *is*. It is part and parcel of what marriage is about, as the total gift of self between husband and wife. "A child does not come from outside as something added on to the mutual love of the spouses, but springs from the very heart of that mutual giving, as its fruit and fulfillment."<sup>15</sup>

This is what the Church means when she teaches that marital or conjugal love has a unitive meaning and a procreative meaning that are inseparable.<sup>16</sup> Openness to the gift of life is necessary for the husband and wife to receive completely the other's gift of self. Closing oneself to one of the meanings of married love, either procreative or unitive, closes oneself to the other meaning as well. As the bishops of the United States have taught, "The unitive meaning is distorted if the procreative meaning is deliberately disavowed. Conjugal love is then diminished. This love is, by its nature, faithful, exclusive, and intended to be fecund."<sup>17</sup>

Because married love is intertwined with openness to the gift of life, only a man and a woman can enter this unique relationship. When a man and a woman promise themselves to each other in marriage, they are also promising to be open to the gift of life, open to receiving children if so blessed, and never deliberately closing themselves to this gift. Two persons of the same sex are incapable of entering into a marital union and of welcoming life between them. Sexual behavior between two persons of the same sex is always closed to unity and the gift of life.<sup>18</sup> Sexual difference between husband and wife is necessary both for the total gift of self and also for openness to the gift of life.

### Handing It On:

The Church's teaching that authentic marital love is always open to life (that is, it is always procreative *in kind* if not also procreative in fact)<sup>19</sup> is a treasure still waiting to be discovered and fully appreciated by many. In various ways, the teaching is often misunderstood. Some think (incorrectly) that the Church is calling husbands and wives to have as many children as is humanly possible. But the Church teaches responsible parenthood.<sup>20</sup> Others misunderstand the Church's teaching as restricting individual freedom. But openness to life enables true freedom—the freedom of the gift, to give oneself completely to the other. As Pope John Paul II expressed, “Freedom cannot be understood as a license to do *absolutely anything*; it means a *gift of self*. Even more: it means an *interior discipline of the gift*... All this is made real in the ‘communion of persons.’”<sup>21</sup> Finally, some falsely assume that marital love can still be unitive even if it is closed to procreation. This is why some people might think that even two persons of the same sex could be “united” in “marriage,” even though their “union” would be unable to bring forth human life. But it is impossible for two persons of the same sex to form a conjugal union—to be a union of body and soul, a true spousal union—because their “body-persons” are the same, not different. Without sexual difference and complementarity, life-giving union is not possible. One of the great opportunities for catechesis is to invite a fuller reception of the truth that spousal love is inseparably unitive

and procreative. The very union of husband and wife is itself life-giving, for it alone is a union founded on authentic self-gift, which includes openness to life.

**2. “You give yourself, then, totally and completely ... saying ‘I love you so much, I’m going to give myself to you as a gift, and I am open to whatever that brings and whatever God wants.’”**

[00:36]

.....

*Key topics:* THE UNIQUE GIFT OF SELF IN MARRIAGE;  
GIFT OF SELF OPENS TO THE GIFT OF LIFE

Every person is called to a life of self-gift. “Man can fully discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself.”<sup>22</sup> Marriage, however, is a unique vocation to self-gift. When a woman and a man as bride and groom recite their wedding vows, they do not promise to give only a part of themselves; instead, they promise to give their *entire* selves to each other, for better or worse, richer or poorer.

The bond of marriage, therefore, is unlike any other relationship between human persons. As the faithful, permanent, and fruitful bond of one man and one woman, marriage means that husband and wife say “forever” to each other.<sup>23</sup> Only a man and a woman can authentically make this promise, because only a man and a woman can give their whole persons (body and soul) to each other as husband and wife—forever.

The bond of marriage is also unique, because the complete gift of self exchanged between husband and wife has the capacity to bring forth and care for new human life in an environment of faithful, exclusive, permanent, and fruitful love. *Self-giving love is always life-giving.* In other words, married love is called to be always open to life, open to the superabundance of love that may result in the gift of a child. “*This mutual gift of the person in marriage opens to the gift of a new life, a new human being.*”<sup>24</sup>

The gift of self and openness to life, which uniquely define marriage, are only possible for a man and a woman who are able to promise themselves to each other as husband and wife. Two persons of the same sex are unable to make this promise, because they cannot give themselves to the other so as to form a life-giving union of love. Although friendship is possible between two persons of the same sex,<sup>25</sup> marriage is impossible, because its very meaning includes sexual difference and openness to life.

### Handing It On:

The gift of self in marriage is a *heroic, life-giving* adventure. But our young people often receive counterfeit visions of marriage, because they often hear faulty messages about what it means to be a human person, what it means to be a man and a woman. Happiness is so often measured by taking or acquiring from others—*what am I going to get out of this relationship, this work, this deal? What am I entitled to?* Sadly, marriages themselves are often built on the sand of selfishness and self-seeking rather than the rock of selflessness and self-giving. Painful experiences and false reasoning have seeped into the hearts of many. In this light, speaking of “self-gift” and “openness to life” when it comes to marriage cuts against the common grain. Some hear it as a “limit” or “restriction” to one’s freedom, and saying “forever” is a risk many are no longer willing to take. Nevertheless, in focus groups on marriage conducted with Catholic young adults in their twenties, “commitment” was a word that still held value in their ideal of marriage, even despite not understanding or accepting that the gift of self between husband and wife undergirds the commitment of marriage. There is a hunger for the truth. Our young people need to be invited to the true horizon of self-gift, and they hunger for the evidence that it is the true path to happiness. As the Second Vatican Council reminded us, it is precisely through a sincere gift of self that man and woman image God and fully find themselves.<sup>26</sup> Self-gift is the horizon of the Cross and Resurrection, Jesus’ horizon, a horizon of life, hope, adventure, and dependence on the Father. Our young people have been made for this adventure. We must not be afraid to witness to the vocation of marriage as a heroic adventure of self-gift and openness to life.

### 3. "Children are a gift and a blessing."

[01:13]

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*Key topics:* CHILDREN AS SUPREME GIFT;  
MARRIAGE AS RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP OF THAT GIFT;  
PROCREATION AS PARTICIPATION IN GOD'S CREATIVE ACTION

*What is a child?* This is perhaps one of the most important questions of our age and every age, because in the answer lies an essential key to unlocking the meaning of what it is to be human. TV shows, news stories, and pop culture portray the child as a *trophy*, something that's been earned and can be shown off. At other times, the child is treated as a *product* or *commodity*, something that's manufactured or discarded at will. The truth is far different. *A child is an unrepeatable human life, and as such, a child is always a gift, always more, always beyond the boundaries of measured value.* Every human person, from the moment of his or her conception, is an immeasurable gift.

Every child is a mystery of superabundance. Not only are a man and a woman necessary for bringing forth a child, but God himself is involved from the very beginning, creating and sustaining every child's soul. "Called to give life, spouses share in the creative power and fatherhood of God."<sup>27</sup> Every child is a new creation. We cannot put a price on a child. Any loving mother and father know this instinctively. A child cannot be measured or subsumed into economic units or a mathematical equation. As the Church teaches, children are the "supreme gift" of marriage, the "crowning glory" of the love between husband and wife.<sup>28</sup>

There are many blessings of marriage. The love, mutual help, and companionship between husband and wife are just a few of these precious gifts that are manifest in countless ways in daily married life. But a child is the "supreme gift" because a child is a unique human life with inviolable dignity, made in the image of God. This means that a child cannot be compared to other gifts nor be considered a measure of "how much" a particular

marriage is “blessed.” Certainly, the Church has always held up in gratitude the generosity of families who are able to responsibly welcome and raise many children.<sup>29</sup> But the child is never a “measuring rod” or “ruler.” He or she is not a puzzle piece that somehow “completes” a husband and a wife or “fills in” an empty gap. A child is always bestowed as a *gift*, a blessing freely given and meant to be received with gratitude.

In discussions and debates over the meaning of marriage today, our culture’s forgetfulness of the child is all too apparent. What used to be taken for granted—the intrinsic relationship between marriage and children—is now often forgotten, overlooked, or ignored. Recovering a sense for the gift of the child, and the responsibility and stewardship entailed by such a gift, is a vital step toward recovering the authentic meaning of marriage.

### **Handing It On:**

If we look at the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (as well as earlier times) to see who has been the most increasingly persecuted and forgotten member of the human community, consistently reduced to a subhuman level in journals, clinics, laboratories, entertainment, and laws, it is the child.<sup>30</sup> This is not only the case with the unborn. Laws concerning the most vital institution for children—marriage—have increasingly neglected or dismissed the concerns of children. This has been the case with “no-fault” divorce laws, and now it is the case in proposals to “redefine” marriage to include two persons of the same sex. The focus rests on adults rather than on the needs of children for a father and a mother. Unfortunately, many sectors of society have a rather dim view of the sacred gift of the child. Our families, parishes, and schools are the core locations—the strategic points of the New Evangelization—where a true sense of the gift of the child can be renewed and can radiate into the larger community. We need to recover and re-instill an authentic appreciation for the gift of the child and cultivate the corresponding responsibility and duty toward that gift. We are a people prone to measurements. We need to be reminded that some things cannot be measured. Catechesis and preaching on the

gift of the child are key components of the promotion and protection of marriage. In this way, the Gospel of Life and the protection of marriage are closely interlocked.

### FEATURE TOPIC: *The Image of Seedlings*

*Have you ever contemplated a seed? Held in the palm of one's hand, it looks impossibly tiny and fragile. To bury it—alone!—in the dark, damp earth seems an act of foolishness. And yet just at the moment we give it up for lost, the seed—now a seedling—springs forth, saluting the open sky with its little leaves. As any gardener knows, cultivating plants from seed to flower to fruit is a constant work and source of wonder.*

*How much more wonder, then, should be stirred within us when we reflect on the gift of children! The image of seedlings at the beginning of Made for Life serves as an analogy in different ways. As mentioned in the Viewer's Guide, the child, like a seedling, is meant to receive the proper "elements" for a flourishing life—namely, the love of a mother and a father. But another aspect of this analogy is the recovery of wonder.*

*Nature—creation—is full of the surprise and wonder of new life and growth. A great temptation of our technological age is to see creation merely as something to harness, control, confine, subdue. When was the last time we stopped to contemplate a small flower or a tree budding forth from its winter rest or the rich colors of autumn leaves and rested in wonder? We have gifts all around us that point to the Creator. The gift of human life remains an incomparable gift to behold and receive in wonder. How can we recover wonder—and especially wonder for the gift of the child—in our own lives?*

**4. "Since having children, it's been the best reflection of God's love  
I could ever define or try to describe. /  
The idea that we were adding on to our family brought great joy."**

[01:44]

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**Key topics:** THE CALL TO WELCOME A CHILD;  
THE CALL TO BE A CHILD; HOPE AND JOY FOR THE WORLD

To welcome a child is to welcome hope. To welcome a child is to affirm the goodness of life, even in times of suffering and pain. No institution other than marriage has for its very *raison d'être* both to bring forth new human life and to nurture and raise that life in an environment of motherly and fatherly love. Marriage, the union of one man and one woman, is the institution "made for life," meant to protect children and connect them to their biological mother and father. The loving marriage of husband and wife remains the bedrock institution for society and a witness to hope for the world. As Pope John Paul II taught, "The future of the world and of the Church passes through the family."<sup>1</sup>

"Taking a child [Jesus] placed it in their midst, and putting his arms around it he said to them, 'Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me'" (Mk 9:36-37). There's a reason why Jesus repeatedly pointed to the child in his teaching. The child shows us what it means to be human, to live the adventure of the gift (to love and receive one another as gifts) and to live in the confidence of being treasured as a gift and child of God. Jesus also knew that we are constantly tempted to forget the child, to forget our own childhood, and to forget that we have been created to be children of his heavenly Father. As the Son of the Father, Jesus revealed our true calling, to be sons and daughters of the Father through Christ, by his Holy Spirit. "For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, 'Abba, Father!'" (Rom 8:15).

Husbands and wives who are blessed with children witness to the hope and joy of new life. "In giving origin to new life, parents recognize that the child, 'as the fruit of their mu-

tual gift of love, is, in turn, a gift for both of them, a gift which flows from them.”<sup>32</sup> Caring for and raising children can often invite sacrifice, but the hope and joy this courageous sacrifice brings can never be underestimated. The example of a father and a mother welcoming a child shows the world that life is always worth living. It shows that love, and not fear, lies at the very foundation of our existence. To build a civilization of love is to build a civilization that protects the joy and hope of new life.

### Handing It On:

*The answer is the child.* What was God’s greatest answer to the sins and sufferings of mankind? It was a babe, born in Bethlehem—a child, through whom the world would be reconciled to God (see Is 7:14, 9:5-6). This child was Jesus, true God and true man. The divine Son, God himself, became a child for our sake, that we might become children of God.<sup>33</sup> This is a radically important truth of the Christian faith. It also points to the radical importance of the Gospel of Life for the whole world. So often happiness is sought in power, money, and things—in a word, pleasure. Such happiness can only be fleeting. Real happiness can be found only in God, and the child always points to this truth. The child bears witness to our own fundamental need for God. The child helps open our hearts to remember what it means to trust, to be absolutely dependent on love. The child reminds us of the hope to which we are called. In this way, the child, and ultimately Christ himself, the perfect Child, is the answer to the human search for happiness—not the newest gadget, not a raise in salary, not the most recent medical breakthrough, not the latest government program. Christ reveals the great dignity of each human person, including every human child. A society that does not celebrate and protect the child and his or her dignity is a society in need of hope. The protection and promotion of marriage as the union of one man and one woman, as the indispensable pro-child institution, is a work grounded in hope, to bring hope and joy to others. Those of us who preach and teach have the awesome task of inviting others to rediscover the hope and joy at the center of the truth of marriage. In promoting and protecting marriage, let us consider the fundamental place of the child to which Jesus himself bears decisive witness.

## 5. "We were open to life, whether through ... giving birth or through the adoption process."

[02:00]

**Key topics:** INFERTILE COUPLES; COURAGEOUS WITNESS OF ADOPTION;  
OPENNESS TO LIFE ESSENTIAL FOR ALL MARRIAGES

Some marriages are blessed with many children. Some are blessed with few children. And some may not be blessed with any children of their own. The Church reaches out with pastoral care to all husbands and wives who, through infertility and/or miscarriage (for reasons beyond their control), are unable to have a child of their own. This is a painful and difficult cross for married couples who desire the blessing of a child. Even in the suffering that comes from the absence or loss of a child, couples who are infertile for reasons beyond their control are still blessed with a unique calling to fruitfulness, perhaps being called to adoption, foster care, or to a particular form of service in fruitful love toward those in need.<sup>34</sup> They can bear witness to life, and their love is still fruitful and remains called to fruitfulness.<sup>35</sup> This is also the case with husbands and wives beyond child-bearing years. All authentic spousal love—that is, the love between a husband and a wife—is procreative *in kind*, if not procreative in fact (see “Handing It On,” below). All spousal love is meant to be open to life, open to the gift of the other. In a real way, married couples who struggle with infertility, but remain respectful of the sacred gift of the child by not resorting to artificial means to acquire a child, provide a unique witness to the child as the supreme gift of marriage.

Some husbands and wives, whether struggling with infertility or not, are called to the courageous and generous act of adopting a child in need of a home and family. The Church praises those families in which “true parental love is ready to go beyond the bonds of flesh and blood in order to accept children from other families.”<sup>36</sup> It is important to remember, however, that adoption compensates for a *loss*, for instance, when a child has no mother or father to care for him or her. Adoption is not an alternative to biological mothering and fathering; rather it takes its form from natural generation. This means that adoption, as

an act of generous love to children in need, is different from deliberately depriving a child of a mother or a father by placing him or her with two women or two men who stand as legal “parents.”

Openness to life, openness to the child, is essential to every marriage and all spouses, even those suffering from infertility or beyond childbearing years. Because this is so, marriage is and can only be the union of a man and a woman as husband and wife. In and through their sexual difference, a husband and wife complement each other and give themselves as a gift to the other, remaining open to the other’s gift and open to life.

### Handing It On:

A common argument made by those wanting to redefine marriage to include two persons of the same sex is that such a “same-sex union” would be the same as or equivalent to a husband and a wife who are unable to have children of their own. Because there are married couples who experience permanent infertility or sterility (for reasons beyond their control), as well as those who are beyond childbearing years, some claim that the meaning of marriage has no intrinsic relation to the child, to procreation. This is a fundamentally mistaken claim. The bodily reality of a husband and a wife is such that they are capable of forming a total communion of persons (body and soul) that is the natural route through which children enter the world. Even when external circumstances (for example, infertility and age) prevent a husband and wife from conceiving a child *in fact*, their expressions of intimacy are still—and always—procreative *in kind*. That is to say, sexual union between a husband and wife is the *kind of action* capable of conceiving a child—the *only* kind of action that can do so, actually.<sup>37</sup> A husband and wife bear witness to life in their very union. On the other hand, the bodily reality of two persons of the same sex is such that they cannot—ever—unite conjugally in a life-giving union. Such a “union” can never be procreative, either “in fact” or “in kind.” Because of this, there is

no analogy between the two-in-one-flesh communion of persons between husband and wife, open to life, and sexual behavior between two persons of the same sex.

### **FEATURE TOPIC: *Protecting Marriage Promotes a Culture of Life***

*At first glance, there might seem to be no connection between “marriage issues” and “life issues.” What does the protection of marriage as the union of one man and one woman have to do with being pro-life? Everything. The connection is the child. Every child is a gift. Marriage is the essential pro-child institution, and thus it is the essential pro-life institution. Children are meant to be welcomed into life as the gifts they are, and the loving union of a husband and a wife is the natural context that protects the child as a gift.*

*“Redefining” marriage essentially “redefines” children out of marriage—it makes children secondary or extrinsic—since two persons of the same sex are incapable of uniting themselves conjugally and conceiving a child together. If two persons of the same sex want children, the means used would counter the true dignity and rights of the child, whether through (a) illicit reproductive technology, which inevitably treats the child as a manufactured product, or (b) adoption by a same-sex “couple,” which in this case takes a child already tragically deprived of his or her own father or mother (or both), and places the child in a situation that contradicts the mother-father unit, further depriving the child of a mother and father together.*

*Legalized abortion already threatens the existence of every child and disregards the sanctity and dignity of all human life. Regardless of the intention, the proposal to “redefine” marriage would be another drastic dismissal of the child, advancing the logic of the culture of death.*

# Fathers and Mothers Matter

## 6. "I believe a mother and father are the building block of the family."

[02:33]

*Key topics:* MOMS AND DADS MATTER; NATURAL FAMILY BASED ON MARRIAGE;  
SOCIETY JUSTLY PROMOTES THE NATURAL FAMILY

Women and men—moms and dads—matter for children, for families, and for society. The proposal to redefine marriage to include two persons of the same sex essentially denies that men and women really matter and denies that they each make unique contributions to a family. With such a proposal, motherhood and fatherhood become empty shells that can be filled by any person. But only a man can be a father. Only a woman can be a mother. This is a profound truth with serious implications, and it needs to be rediscovered and protected today.

The family is naturally based on marriage, the union of one man and one woman. As Pope John XXIII taught, "The family, founded upon marriage freely contracted, one and indissoluble, must be regarded as the natural, primary cell of human society."<sup>38</sup> Therefore, husbands and wives—fathers and mothers—have an indispensable place in the family and in society. Only a husband and a wife can form the unique union of love open to the gift of fatherhood and motherhood. Fatherhood and motherhood are not meant to be roles divided from each other but are meant to be united in the bond of marriage. The unfortunate reality of families that have experienced the loss or absence of either a mother or a father does not alter the fact that the natural family is founded upon marriage.

While the Church reaches out to all families, especially those who are suffering or broken, the fact of brokenness should never lead to the false idea that there are a number of "alternative forms" of family life equivalent to that founded upon marriage as the union

of one man and one woman. Authentic family life, even in suffering or brokenness, takes its cue from the marriage of one man and one woman and is called to promote and protect this incomparable core of family life. The lifelong, faithful, and fruitful bond of marriage enables husband and wife to welcome a new child as the expected fruit of their love, and not as a product, a diversion, or an emergency. For this reason, “to promote and protect marriage as the union of one man and one woman is itself a matter of justice.”<sup>39</sup> Marriage and the family have an importance that is unmatched, forming the original community at the basis of the larger community of society.

### **Handing It On:**

“Parenting” is a word tossed around in various ways today. In the promotion and protection of marriage, the power and influence of language form a key consideration. Just as the word “marriage” is often co-opted, and is applied to relationships that cannot, in fact, be authentic marriages, the same goes for the word “parenting.” The implication is sometimes given that any person, of either gender—or any number of persons—can equally and identically be a “parent.” However, parenting is *not* gender-neutral. The word “parenting” properly refers to “mothering and fathering.” A mother and a father form a complementary unit, a unit—and unity—meant to be preserved and protected in marriage. “Parenting” has a unique meaning, because “marriage” has a unique meaning. The proposal to redefine marriage is a proposal to redefine mothering and fathering and, essentially, to redefine what it means to be a woman and a man. By being attentive to the way language is used, catechesis can safeguard the true meaning of the realities conveyed in and through language.

**7. "I want [my daughter] to have the best life she can. And I want her to feel secure in her home life, with me as a mom. But I also want her to know that it is so important for her to marry a wonderful Christian man who can guide her family, her future family, and be a wonderful father."**

[03:14]

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*Key topics:* HEROIC WITNESS OF SINGLE PARENTS; CHURCH'S PASTORAL CONCERN;  
DIFFERENT FROM DELIBERATELY DEPRIVING A CHILD OF A MOM AND A DAD

Single parents, who raise their child or children without the parent of the opposite sex, often because of factors beyond their choice or control, demonstrate heroic sacrifice and courageous dedication. These mothers (or fathers) often go to great measures to secure a loving and healthy environment for their children. The Church reaches out to all single parents and encourages and supports them in their particular challenges. Single parents should be able to rely on a network of support from their own families, parishes, neighborhoods, and larger community.

It must be emphasized that promoting the need for, and indispensable place of, a mother and a father is not a judgment against parents who are single for reasons beyond their control, such as abandonment, separation, or death. There is a vast difference between, on the one hand, the unfortunate circumstance of becoming a single parent and, on the other hand, deliberately depriving a child of a mother or a father by placing him or her into the care of two men or two women as "legal parents." Single parents still bear witness to the essential place of sexual difference and to the "space" meant to be filled by either a father or a mother. In no way do single parents contradict the vital importance of the complementarity of father and mother in the lives and day-to-day development of their children. On the other hand, the attempt to redefine marriage to include two persons of the same sex *deliberately* jettisons either a mother or a father (or both in terms of one's biological mother and father) from the life of any child raised in such a household.

### **Handing It On:**

It is often argued that two parents are better than one. There are two ways of interpreting this statement. If it means that, under normal circumstances, having a mom and dad is better than being deprived of one, then yes, of course, having two parents is better than having only one. But the other interpretation holds that two “parents”—of either gender—are better than one. According to this point of view, the difficulties often associated with single-parent families are not caused by the specific lack of a father or a mother, but by the general lack of a second “parent.” Two parents can share chores and childcare, love and lessons. What a child needs, continues the argument, is not a father and a mother, but two committed, loving adults of either gender. However, as said above, this view is premised on a fundamentally mistaken notion of what it means to be a parent and what it means to be a human person. Only a man can be a father; only a woman can be a mother. Children do not need just the generic presence of two adults; they need the gender-specific presence of a father and a mother. Although single parents can still witness to the essential and indispensable place of mothers and fathers, the idea that two persons of the same sex can be “parents” entails the claim that moms and dads do not really matter. This is a crucial difference, a difference that calls for pastoral attention and sensitivity coupled with courageous honesty and love.

**8. "Children need a mother and a father for the balance in their lives ... and the mirror-image. / All the development that needs to happen from an emotional, mental, physical component ... only a mother and a father can give."**

[04:55]

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*Key topics:* NEED FOR A FATHER AND MOTHER;  
RIGHT TO A MOTHER AND A FATHER; UNFAIR TO DELIBERATELY DEPRIVE

It should not require any research to understand that a child is meant to have a mother and a father. After all, every child comes into the world already having one of each; procreation depends on the contribution of both a mother and a father (with help from God).<sup>40</sup> It also should not come as a surprise that the institution of marriage is *the* institution meant to ensure that every child can know and be cared for by both a mother and a father. "Children are meant to be the gift of the permanent and exclusive union of a husband and a wife."<sup>41</sup> Socially and historically, marriage has served to encourage fathers and mothers to remain bonded with each other so as to form an indispensable unity for their children. In particular, history and experience have shown the crucial role that marriage plays in preserving and cultivating a father's connection with his children.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, today's social climate requires a renewed consideration of the vital roles of mothers and fathers for their children.

A child needs the unique identities and gifts of a mom and a dad. "In the education of children, the role of the father and that of the mother are equally necessary."<sup>43</sup> A child's own identity as a boy or a girl is uniquely shaped by the love and care given by both a mother and a father. A mother and a father, as wife and husband, provide an irreplaceable context of love for their children. Children learn not only what it means to be a man or a woman from their father and mother, but also how men and women are meant to relate and interact in society. A husband and a wife thus form an incomparable model of interpersonal communion for their children.

The nature of a child's fundamental *need* for a mother and a father, derived from the fact that every child *has* a biological mother and father, provides the basis for understanding that a child has a *right* to his or her mother and father.<sup>44</sup> In fact, every child deserves to be conceived by an act of love between his or her mother and father whose marriage proclaims that the child is not an intruder or an afterthought, but the welcomed and expected outcome of their love. Every child has a right to be raised by his or her biological mother and father. The state has no authority to deprive children of this right. This is also why adoption compensates for a loss and should never be seen simply as an “alternative”—all other things being equal—to remaining with one's biological mother and father. Even when a child's right to his or her biological parents cannot be met, this never justifies a redefinition of motherhood and fatherhood. Such a redefinition is unfair and gravely unjust to the child.

### **Handing It On:**

Discussions about the meaning of marriage today often invoke the importance of justice, fairness, rights, and equality. This approach resonates with many young adults, who have a deep appreciation for these values. Because of this, it is vitally important to help our young people discern the *real* matter of justice at stake in the question of marriage. Emphasizing every child's need for a mother and a father can provide an important “opening” for explaining why protecting marriage as the union of one man and one woman is at the heart of a just society. This is because proposals to redefine marriage to include two persons of the same sex overlook or ignore the rights of the most vulnerable persons among us, children. Children have no one to speak for them except adults. When adults prioritize their own desires over the needs of children, and when society accepts and approves this shift, a fundamental injustice strikes the core of the human community and leaves every aspect of social justice in peril. In our catechesis and preaching on matters of justice, particularly social justice and the common good, we need to integrate a special emphasis on the protection of marriage and the family. It is a critical social justice issue of our day. The noble desire of young adults to build a more just world should be encouraged, but authentic justice is always contradicted if it is sought at the expense of marriage. Our

young people deserve to hear what often goes unsaid in the contemporary debates about marriage: it is always unfair, unjust, and wrong to deliberately deprive a child of a mother and a father. Children deserve better from society. Protecting marriage treats children—along with men, women, and all of society—with justice.

**FEATURE TOPIC: *Marriage and the Love for the Poor:  
The Depth and Consistency of the Church's Social Doctrine***

*Following in the example of Jesus, the Church has a special love for the poor, the weak, the oppressed, the persecuted, and the most vulnerable. She reaches out to those on the fringes, those who are cast out and downtrodden, and invites all people to follow Jesus. The Church's love for the poor is a key part of her social doctrine, which also includes the protection of marriage and the family. How are the two related?*

*The protection of marriage includes the protection of the rights of those most vulnerable among us: children. In addition, the family, founded on the marriage of one man and one woman, plays a crucial role in the well-being of society—including the well-being of the poor—and thus is an integral aspect of the Church's promotion of social justice and integral human development. The teaching of the Church is a continuum. There is no inconsistency. It is the teaching of Jesus, who reached out to the little ones and to the "least" among us, while also teaching the truth, for he is Truth.*

*Reflection on the inner consistency of the Church's social doctrine, particularly by connecting different aspects such as the love for the poor with the protection of marriage and the family, can be a helpful avenue for handing on the richness of the Church's teaching. Love for the poor, love for the child, and love for the truth of marriage are all found in the Heart of Jesus, who has entrusted the Church with the mission to proclaim this love and invite all to enter into his Way.*

**9. "We each have our individual roles ... /  
It's not that I don't play with them, but [my husband] plays  
in a way that I don't. He'll play football with them and tackle them hard,  
and I'll play football with them and tickle them."**

[05:49]

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**Key topics:** MOTHERS AND FATHERS BRING UNIQUE GIFTS;  
THE DIFFERENCE CONSISTS NOT OF STATIC "ROLES"  
BUT IN THE WAY A FUNCTION OR ROLE IS CARRIED OUT

Men and women are equal in dignity but different in important and obvious ways.<sup>45</sup> So too are fathers and mothers. A mother and a father bring unique gifts and talents to the shared enterprise of parenting. Not every gift or talent is gender- or sex-specific, and not every mother or father possesses all the gifts or talents normally associated with one or the other sex. Nevertheless, every father and mother always brings to the parenting enterprise something completely unique: his or her distinctive personal identity as a man and as a woman.

What are some of the unique gifts that a mother and a father contribute? To begin with, a mother, in addition to her own distinctive womanhood and femininity, brings the unique ability to breast-feed, to understand and communicate with children, and to nurture children. Only a mom, as a woman, can breast-feed. Indeed, studies have consistently shown the benefits of breastfeeding to both the mother's and child's health and well-being.<sup>46</sup> Studies have also indicated the advantage of mothers in interpreting the needs of newborns and infants, in understanding a child's nonverbal communication, and in communicating with children. The particular biological makeup of mothers, especially in terms of specific hormones (for example, estrogen and oxytocin), has been noted as contributing to a mother's special nurturing capacity.<sup>47</sup> All these points provide a foundation for understanding why motherhood has often been characterized as nurturing.

On the other hand, a father's gifts, in addition to his own distinctive manhood and masculinity, have been associated with his special talents of providing for his family, disciplining, playing with and challenging his children, and finally loving his wife, the mother of his children. As is well known, men in general have higher levels of testosterone.<sup>48</sup> This biological difference has been noted to contribute to a father's unique talents of strong and assertive discipline; playing with, surprising, and exciting his children; and, finally, challenging and encouraging his children in taking on new activities and growing in self-confidence as a man or a woman. Lastly, the influence that a father has on his children when he loves their mother is inestimable. By loving the mother of his children, a father teaches his sons how to treat women with love and respect and teaches his daughters to expect love and respect from men. The unique impact of a father is particularly seen in the various studies and literature concerning fatherless households.<sup>49</sup>

When speaking of the unique gifts of fathers and mothers, it is important to clarify what is *not* being said. Motherhood and fatherhood are not simply static, rigid, or culturally locked roles or functions, as if only moms “nurture” and only dads “provide.”<sup>50</sup> Whereas mothers bring particular gifts of nurturing, fathers also nurture. And whereas fathers bring particular gifts of providing and playing, for instance, mothers also provide and play. The difference is in the *way in which* they nurture, provide, and play, not simply the “function” of nurturing, providing, playing, and so on. A mother nurtures, provides, and plays in a way distinctive to who she is as a woman and a mother. A father nurtures, provides, and plays in a way distinctive to who he is as a man and a father. As mentioned by Katie in the video, both mothers and fathers may play, but they play *differently* because of the unique differences between them.

### Handing It On:

Any discussion or presentation of the unique gifts of mothers and fathers needs to be able to respond to the common criticism of stereotyping. Some would claim that the generalizations above are simply cultural stereotypes that have resulted from centuries of societal conditioning. First, this ignores the profound fact of sexual difference and uncritically assumes that all differences between

men and women are socially constructed. Second, this ignores studies that indicate a deeper, biological rootedness to the differences between mothers and fathers.<sup>51</sup> And third, the criticism of gender stereotyping often assumes that the speaker is referring to static roles and functions, rather than the *way* roles and functions are carried out. This last point is the key for moving the consideration beyond a fear of stereotyping and into the truth of the significance of sexual difference in the way a father fathers and a mother mothers. Fathering and mothering can and should involve many similar and shared activities, but the key difference in these activities lies in the mother and father who undertake them. Only a man can be a father. Only a woman can be a mother. In the end, nothing replaces the unique gift of being a man and being a woman and what that gift brings to the task of parenting, that is, fathering and mothering.

**10. “Studies show so clearly that children raised by a mother and a father do better in school, they’re less likely to get involved in drugs or gangs, they thrive in many other areas of life. The state is in the business of supporting that which makes society stronger ... the family unit.”**

[06:13]

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**Key topics:** THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES; THE ROLE OF THE STATE;  
THE IMMEASURABLE IMPACT OF A FATHER AND A MOTHER

The social sciences, as well as the biological sciences, play an important part in supporting the truth that children need a mother and a father who are united as wife and husband.<sup>52</sup> Multiple studies demonstrate that children are not simply “adaptable” to any family structure but that the best environment for children is a home with a loving mother and father (not simply “two parents,” but a mother and a father).<sup>53</sup>

However, although social science can do much good in support of an authentic quest for the truth, some studies can be misleading. In approaching the conclusions of the social

sciences, it is important to remember that studies are often highly dependent on the perspective of the person(s) leading the study, as well as the selected data and control groups. Properly interpreting studies can be quite tricky, especially when certain studies aim to support a specific agenda or ideology. The social sciences, like any other science, require adequate criteria of truth and a proper recognition of their circumscribed methods. The Church's social doctrine is an important reference point here, because it includes respect for the truth and the inviolable dignity of the human person.<sup>54</sup> Just because a study states a conclusion does not always mean that the truth has been reached.

For example, some recent studies have purported that “redefining” marriage to include two persons of the same sex will have no negative effect on children and may even be better for a child's well-being. What is one to think about such studies? First, it is important to see whether the conclusions respect and are guided by basic moral principles and unchanging truths, such as the inviolable dignity of every human person, the significance of sexual difference, the importance of one's sexual identity,<sup>55</sup> the call to a chaste life, and the meaning of marriage. Such principles and truths should always undergird any interpretation of sociological data. Conclusions contrary to the natural moral law (that which accords with the nature of the human person, inscribed in the heart and known by reason) are not only false but may also reveal a deeper flaw in the methodology of a study. Related to this first point, it is also vital to discern what presuppositions may be shaping a study. For example, the terms of measurement in some studies may presume a reductive view of human flourishing. Parents might be labeled “successful” if they provide the comfort of a household with all basic needs and wants met. But this is hardly the full extent of human happiness or the full measure of a child's well-being. Personal and moral formation can never be comprehensively measured by the social sciences. Indicators can be given, but no social study will ever capture the whole breadth of human reality. Finally, many social scientists have admitted that such studies are premature and contain a very small and carefully selected (rather than random) sample population. This fact brings to mind the claims made in the 1970s that “no-fault” divorce would have no negative effects on children. Yet only a few decades later, the negative effects of divorce (including those labeled “no-fault”) have been well demonstrated.<sup>56</sup>

In the end, no matter how good and valuable a study is, the impact of a father and a mother is *immeasurable*. No one can adequately measure the full significance that a father and a mother have in loving and raising their children. Two persons of the same sex may be able to provide care, affection, and the support of basic needs, but only a man and a woman, as husband and wife, can give the unique gift of fathering and mothering, as well as the witness of sexually differentiated, fruitful love. As Pete explained, the state has a vested interest in protecting and promoting marriage as the union of one man and one woman, because it should support that which makes society stronger. The natural family, founded upon the marriage of one man and one woman, is the key cell of society, and its fundamental building block.<sup>57</sup> The evidence of multiple studies only reinforces the responsibility of the state to protect and privilege the most universal, elemental, and critical of all human and social institutions: marriage between a man and a woman.

### Handing It On:

Catechesis is a distinct task from the work of the social sciences. Nevertheless, people in our day and age often treasure empirical data, measurements, and sound bites above logical, moral, and/or theological considerations. Because of this, it is important for those who teach and preach on the true meaning of marriage to be familiar with a basic approach to the social sciences and with particular, well-founded studies and results in service to the truth. This does not mean that everyone needs to become a sociology expert, but some familiarity will go a long way toward inviting young people to see that science done properly does not conflict with truths of faith and reason. More importantly, our young people need to be given the tools to help them discern when science has gone awry. For example, when a study claims that two self-identified lesbians are even better “parents” than a mother and a father, but also admits that the children in such situations have a more “fluid” (that is, confused) understanding of their sexual identity, there is something seriously problematic about the study’s conclusion. The ability to recognize that skewed moral principles can compromise a study’s ultimate judgments is a critical asset to have in today’s world of rapid and wide-ranging information sharing.

## Sexual Difference Matters

**11. “The necessity of the difference doesn’t end at conception;  
it carries on through the whole life of the child.”**

[o8:32]

*Key topics:* SEXUAL DIFFERENCE IS ESSENTIAL TO MARRIAGE;  
THE DIFFERENCE IS THE DIFFERENCE

The above considerations about the indispensable place of mothers and fathers in and for the life of children are all built on the truth that *sexual difference is essential to marriage*. This video and companion guide and booklet presume the foundational material provided in the previous *Made for Each Other* resources.

Marriage, the two-in-one-flesh union of life-giving love, requires a man and a woman—a husband and a wife. Conceiving a child takes a father and a mother. Because sexual difference is necessary for the beginning of life, does it not make sense that sexual difference would remain essential for the entire span of life? As the bishops explain, “The procreative meaning of marriage involves not only the conception of children, but also their upbringing and education.... The loving communion of the spouses is the primary context in which children are both conceived and brought up in love.”<sup>58</sup>

Sexual difference matters. Moms and dads matter. Marriage matters. Attempts to re-define marriage radically threaten the fabric of life and society.<sup>59</sup> Children deserve better. Men and women as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, deserve better too. The natural family unit based on marriage makes an irreplaceable contribution to society and to the common good. But even before any functional or instrumental contribution is con-

sidered, the intrinsic and unique good of marriage itself needs to be respected and protected. The difference *is* the difference. In the face of the various challenges to the unique meaning of marriage, first and foremost, the essential place and incomparable value of sexual difference need to resound. Sexual difference is the foundational difference that allows marriage to be what it is. In this light, sexual difference is the difference that opens the spouses to the gift of the child and to the unique gifts of motherhood and fatherhood. This difference—sexual difference, and the uniqueness of marriage—makes an immeasurable difference to the world.

### **Handing It On:**

*From the beginning* (see Mt 19:4-6). Catechesis on marriage requires a continual return to and deep consideration of the significance of sexual difference and the complementarity of man and woman as husband and wife. Without an adequate understanding of anthropology and sexual difference, that is, what it means that the human person is created male and female, every other attempt to explain the unique meaning of marriage falls short. This is why the conviction that marriage is *made for life* only makes proper sense when built on the understanding that a man and a woman are *made for each other*.

## Marriage: The Adventure of Life-Giving Love

Marriage is made for life, for communion, for mission.<sup>60</sup> It is a mission for transmission—the transmission of life and love through the faithful, exclusive, permanent, and fruitful bond made by one man and one woman. Marriage is a great adventure, calling for heroic sacrifice through the gift of one's self to another. Marriage is a sign of hope for the world, for it is the essential institution made to welcome and foster new human life as the gift that it is. In marriage, the family is built on the rock of spousal love, and mothers and fathers are united in their common and indispensable task in service of life. Through marriage, husband and wife are bound not only to each other, but also to the children given them by God, together in the great promise of fruitful love. No other institution serves such purposes or meets such needs. Marriage is unique for a reason.



**MARRIAGE**  
*Unique for a Reason*

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## NOTES

1. See Second Vatican Council, *Vatican Council II: Volume 1: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing, 1996). All subsequent citations of Vatican II documents refer to this edition. Translation modified.
2. See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana–United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], 2000), no. 1601; also see *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 48.
3. The fact is that even “sterilized sex” has great consequences. A popular portrayal of these consequences can be found in psychiatrist Miriam Grossman’s works: *Unprotected* (New York: Sentinel, 2003) and *You’re Teaching My Child What?* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2009). See also Jennifer Roback Morse, *Smart Sex* (Dallas: Spence, 2005).
4. See Pope John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life (Evangelium Vitae)* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1995), no. 13.
5. The so-called “promise” of preventing pregnancy is one that contraception frequently fails to deliver. For more information, see Hanna Klaus, MD, “Action, Effectiveness and Medical Side-Effects of Common Methods of Family Planning,” USCCB, [www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp/action.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp/action.shtml) (accessed February 1, 2011) and USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, “Fact Sheet: Greater Access to Contraception Does Not Reduce Abortions,” [www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/contraception/contrafactsheet.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/contraception/contrafactsheet.pdf) (accessed February 1, 2011).
6. By “illicit reproductive technologies” is meant those techniques that *substitute* for the conjugal act and thereby seek to obtain a child apart from the sexual union of husband and wife. Such techniques are never morally legitimate. “Reproductive technologies that substitute for the marriage act are not consistent with human dignity.” USCCB, *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*, 5th ed. (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2009), 24. However, treatments that *assist* the conjugal act to be performed or to achieve its objective of conception after being normally performed are morally licit. See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), *Dignitas Personae* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2008), esp. no. 12; and CDF, *Donum Vitae* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1987), esp. II, B, no. 7.
7. See Pope Benedict XVI, *Charity in Truth (Caritas in Veritate)* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2009), no. 75. See also *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 58; and *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 51.
8. USCCB, *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2009), 19.
9. See *Dignitas Personae*, no. 16: “The replacement of the conjugal act by a technical procedure—in addition to being in contradiction with the respect that is due to procreation as something that cannot be reduced to mere reproduction—leads to a weakening of the respect owed to every human being.” See also nos. 6 and 12; and *Donum Vitae*, nos. II, A, 1; and II, B, 4.
10. This proposal has unfortunately been labeled as a “rights” and “nondiscrimination” issue by some. Sadly, this ignores the reality that “redefining” marriage is bad for *everyone*, including persons with a homosexual inclination. This topic will be treated in more depth in a subsequent video.

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11. As a recent example of this reduction of marriage to a bond of affection, without reference to sexual difference or to children, see Judge Vaughn Walker's decision in *Perry v. Schwarzenegger*: "Marriage is the state recognition and approval of a couple's choice to live with each other, to remain committed to one another and to join in an economic partnership and support one another and any dependents." 591 F.3d 1147 (9th Cir.2010) at 67. Elsewhere (at 60-61), it was denied that there is an intrinsic link between marriage and procreation. See [ecf.cand.uscourts.gov/cand/09cv2292/files/09cv2292-ORDER.pdf](http://ecf.cand.uscourts.gov/cand/09cv2292/files/09cv2292-ORDER.pdf) (accessed February 1, 2011).

12. See CCC, nos. 1652-1654.

13. See CCC, no. 1601.

14. See CCC, no. 1643. See also Pope Paul VI, *On the Regulation of Birth (Humanae Vitae)* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1968), no. 9, where he identifies a "characteristic mark" of married love as "fecund" (or fruitful) and teaches that married love "is not confined wholly to the communion of husband and wife; it also aims to go beyond this to bring new life into being" (translation modified). Pope John Paul II (as Karol Wojtyła) discussed the distinction between loving and using a person. In this context, he wrote of marriage: "How is it possible to ensure that one person does not then become for the other—the woman for the man, or the man for the woman—nothing more than the means to an end—i.e., an object used exclusively for the attainment of a selfish end? To exclude this possibility they must share the same end. Such an end, where marriage is concerned, is procreation, the future generation, a family, and, at the same time, the continual ripening of the relationship between two people in all the areas of activity which conjugal life includes." *Love and Responsibility*, trans. H. T. Willets (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993), 30.

15. See CCC, no. 2366.

16. See *Humanae Vitae*, no. 12, where the Holy Father speaks of an "inseparable connection, established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act." For Pope John Paul II's commentary on this passage, see *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body (TOB)*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), nos. 118:2-6 (audience and section numbers). Also see CCC, no. 2366; *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 51; Pope John Paul II, *Letter to Families* (1994), no. 11, [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/letters/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_let\\_02021994\\_families\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_02021994_families_en.html); Pope John Paul II, *On the Family (Familiaris Consortio)* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1982), nos. 29 and 32; and *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, 11-16.

17. *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, 15.

18. See CCC, no. 2357.

19. See "Handing It On" under section 5 for more information about what it means to say that every act of authentic conjugal love is "procreative in kind."

20. For further explanation of "responsible parenthood," see CCC, no. 2368. Also see *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 44; *Letter to Families*, no. 12; *Humanae Vitae*, no. 10; TOB, no. 121; and *Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2004), nos. 232-234.

21. *Letter to Families*, no. 14 (emphasis in original).
22. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 24.
23. See CCC, no. 1644.
24. Pope John Paul II, *On the Dignity and Vocation of Woman (Mulieris Dignitatem)* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1988), no. 18 (emphasis in original).
25. On the importance of authentic and holy friendships for persons with same-sex attraction, see USCCB, *Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2006), [www.usccb.org/doctrine/Ministry.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/doctrine/Ministry.pdf).
26. See *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 24.
27. See CCC, no. 2367.
28. *Gaudium et Spes*, nos. 50 and 48, respectively.
29. See *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 50: “Special mention should be made of those [couples] who after prudent reflection and common decision courageously undertake the proper upbringing of a large number of children.”
30. See John Saward, *The Way of the Lamb: The Spirit of Childhood and the End of the Age* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999).
31. *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 75.
32. *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 92.
33. See Gal 4:4-7: “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption. As proof that you are children, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’ So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.”
34. See *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 14: “Physical sterility . . . can be for spouses the occasion for other important services to the life of the human person, for example, adoption, various forms of educational work, and assistance to other families and to poor or handicapped children.”
35. See CCC, nos. 1654 and 2379.
36. *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 93.
37. Even methods of illicit reproductive technology that “conceive” a child apart from male-female sexual union, such as in vitro fertilization (IVF), still depend on sexual difference to achieve their goal. The union of sperm and

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egg remains necessary for the coming-to-be of a child. Illicit reproductive technology thus does not sidestep sexual difference, but rather is *parasitic* of the fruitful complementarity between men and women. However, the conception of a child in this way is no longer an act of *loving* but a technical act of *production*, performed not by the child's mother and father, but by paid strangers (for example, doctors and lab technicians).

38. Pope John XXIII, *Peace on Earth (Pacem in Terris)*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2003), no. 16. See also CCC, nos. 2207-2213; *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, nos. 209-254.

39. *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, 22.

40. See CCC, no. 2367.

41. *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, 21.

42. For references to various studies, see The Witherspoon Institute, *Marriage and the Public Good: Ten Principles* (Princeton, NJ: Witherspoon Institute, 2008), 22-23.

43. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 242.

44. *Ibid.*, nos. 235 and 245.

45. See CCC, no. 372: "Man and woman were made 'for each other' . . . they are equal as persons ('bone of my bones...') and complementary as masculine and feminine."

46. The benefits of breastfeeding are acknowledged by various groups, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatrics. For additional summary information, see Couple to Couple League, "Benefits of Breastfeeding," Couple to Couple League, [ccl.org/breastfeeding/bf-benefits/index.php](http://ccl.org/breastfeeding/bf-benefits/index.php) (accessed February 1, 2011).

47. More information and references to various studies can be found in Steven E. Rhoads, *Taking Sex Differences Seriously* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2004), 190-222.

48. For more information on testosterone and men, with references to various studies, see *Taking Sex Differences Seriously*, 32-34 and 134-58.

49. Various studies exist, illustrating a consensus even among those who may not share the Church's full teaching on marriage. For an example of an earlier survey of the reality of fatherless families, see David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1995). For additional information that indicates the unique gifts of fathers and mothers, see David Eggebeen, "Do Fathers Matter Uniquely for Adolescent Well-Being?" in *Center for Marriage and Families Research Brief No. 14* (New York: Institute for American Values, 2008). Two popular monographs that include information about the importance of a father and a mother are physician Meg Meeker's *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2006) and *Boys Should Be Boys* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2008).

50. See Pope John Paul II, *Letter to Women* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1995), no. 8: “As a rational and free being, man is called to transform the face of the earth. In this task, which is essentially that of culture, *man and woman alike* share equal responsibility from the start. In their fruitful relationship as husband and wife, in their common task of exercising dominion over the earth, woman and man are marked neither by a static and undifferentiated equality nor by an irreconcilable and inexorably conflictual difference. Their most natural relationship, which corresponds to the plan of God, is the ‘unity of the two,’ a relational ‘uni-duality,’ which enables each to experience their interpersonal and reciprocal relationship as a gift which enriches and which confers responsibility” (emphasis original). See also John Paul II’s General Audience of December 1, 1999: “In families, interpersonal relations develop in which each member is entrusted with a specific task, although without rigid patterns. I do not intend to refer here to those social and functional roles which are expressions of specific historical and cultural contexts. I am thinking rather, of the importance, in the mutual conjugal relationship and the shared parental commitment, of man and woman as they are called to realize their natural characteristics in the context of a deep, enriching and respectful communion. To this ‘unity of the two’ God has entrusted not only the work of procreation and family life, but the creation of history” (*Letter to Women*, no. 8),” [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/audiences/1999/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_aud\\_01121999\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/audiences/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_01121999_en.html).

51. See *Taking Sex Differences Seriously*.

52. See *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, nos. 76 and 78: “The Church’s social doctrine avails itself of contributions from all branches of knowledge, whatever their source, and has an important interdisciplinary dimension. . . . A significant contribution to the Church’s social doctrine comes also from human sciences and the social sciences. In view of that particular part of the truth that it may reveal, no branch of knowledge is excluded. The Church recognizes and receives everything that contributes to the understanding of man in the ever broader, more fluid and more complex network of his social relationships.”

53. For a summary of the importance of marriage in service to children and the common good from representatives of the academy, see *Marriage and the Public Good: Ten Principles*. This document includes references to different studies from the social sciences and biological sciences. For additional links and references to various studies (some of which are also cited below), see the USCCB’s Web site *For Your Marriage*, “Why Married Parents Are Important for Children,” [foryourmarriage.org/married-parents-are-important-for-children/](http://foryourmarriage.org/married-parents-are-important-for-children/) (accessed February 1, 2011). Many studies indicate the unique importance that a married mother and father have for their children. Particular studies and surveys include the following (Note: the authors/directors of such studies are not necessarily representative of the Church’s full teaching on marriage, but they illustrate the breadth of consensus on the importance of mothers and fathers for children): Kristin Anderson Moore, Susan M. Jekielek, and Carol Emig, *Marriage from a Child’s Perspective: How Does Family Structure Affect Children, and What Can We Do about It?* (Washington, DC: Child Trends, 2002); Elizabeth Marquardt, *The Revolution in Parenthood: The Emerging Global Clash Between Adult Rights and Children’s Needs* (New York: Institute for American Values, 2006); *The Meaning of Marriage: Family, State, Market, and Morals*, ed. Robert P. George and Jean Bethke Elshtain (Dallas: Spence Publishing, 2006); W. Bradford Wilcox, et al., *Why Marriage Matters: Twenty-Six Conclusions from the Social Sciences* (New York: Institute for American Values, 2005); David Blankenhorn, *The Future of Marriage* (New York: Encounter Books, 2007) and *Fatherless America* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1995); and Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage* (New York: Broadway Books, 2000).

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54. See *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 78: The interdisciplinary dialogue between the Church and the social sciences “also challenges the sciences to grasp the perspectives of meaning, value and commitment that the Church’s social doctrine reveals and to ‘open themselves to a broader horizon, aimed at serving the individual person who is acknowledged and loved in the fullness of his or her vocation’” (quoting Pope John Paul II, *On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum (Centesimus Annus)* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1991), no. 59.

55. See CCC, no. 2333.

56. For example, see Elizabeth Marquardt, *Between Two Worlds: The Inner Lives of Children of Divorce* (New York: Three Rivers, 2005) and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, *The Divorce Culture: Rethinking Our Commitments to Marriage and Family* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 107-128.

57. See note 38, above.

58. *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, 15-16.

59. *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, 23.

60. See *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana-USCCB, 2005), no. 321.



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