



Recommendations for Parish Ministries and Families

Marriage Is a Trip and God Has the Map! – February 9, 2025

For Parish Pastoral Leaders

The major themes that flow from the readings this weekend include:

- Embracing the call to marriage requires preparation through intentional formation, just like Isaiah needed to be purified before he could accept his call (Isaiah 6:5-7). Parents are asked to help their children learn from a young age how to build lasting friendships and make sacrifices for their benefit. Youth and young adults need guidance to navigate the allure of physical attraction while moving from friendship, to the growth of love through dating, to the commitment and proximate preparation of engagement. As the Vatican says, it calls for Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life.
- St. Paul also experienced the incongruity of being called while he was still persecuting the followers of Jesus Christ. He says he was not fit to be an apostle for that reason, yet God chose him and by God's grace he became an apostle (1 Corinthians 15:9-10). Engaged couples may feel a similar sense of unworthiness to be loved with a lifelong commitment, yet the yearning in their hearts confirms this calling as a Vocation from God, and the sacrament of marriage offers the promise of God's grace to live it out.
- The call of Peter is the only example in all of the Gospels where someone actually confesses to Jesus that they are a sinner (Luke 5:8). It is true that we live in a fallen world. Sometimes people may feel they have found their capital V vocation, but it doesn't work out: religious vocations discern out, marriages might fail. Others may experience disillusionment and frustration when they want to marry or have children but are unable to. What may seem impossible from the human perspective becomes possible when we take God at His word and live as He commands us. That begins when we recognize that we stand before God as sinners, imploring His mercy.



- The promise of life in Christ is that we do not stand alone or isolated—we have a place of radical belonging, and Christian marriage and family life is a beautiful model of our belonging to one another in Christ.

Sample ideas for parish programs and activities:

- Knowing that the vast majority of young Catholic couples are not married sacramentally, parishes should review policies and procedures to promote and encourage marriage and convalidation. This is really a part of the evangelizing mission of the whole People of God, all parishioners. What more can be done to empower parishioners as missionary disciples to their peers? As Pope Francis says, “rather than experts in dire predictions, our judges bent on rooting out every threat and deviation, we should appear as joyful messengers of challenging proposals, guardians of the goodness and beauty which shine forth in a life of fidelity to the Gospel.” (Evangelii Gaudium, 168)
- World Marriage Week is a great time to reflect on the parish’s overall approach to marriage preparation and vocational discernment. There are many excellent resources to enhance these ministries on the Radiate Love parish and young adult pages.
- Prepare your parish’s observance of World Marriage Week, February 9-15, 2025. The Radiate Love website provides materials to easily offer the following:
 - Practical and fun ideas for couples to have a date night.
 - The usual monthly resource guide, focusing on marriage as a vocation from God. There are special blessings this month for married and engaged couples, to be used at Mass after Communion.





For Parish Catechetical Leaders (PCLs) and K-8 Catechists

Catechists and parents should be encouraged to deepen their understanding of the way God calls us to live a Vocation of total self-offering, following the example of Jesus. For most of us, this is found in the vocation of marriage.

- PCLs: when you communicate with the parents and families you serve this month:
 - Share with them the parish or diocese's social media, reminding them that married love is a call to grow in their capacity to radiate God's love into the world.
 - Encourage them to make time this month to share and discuss the monthly reflection and "Learn, Pray, Do" activities.
 - Ask them to share this month's reflection with the young adults they know who may be discerning what God is calling them to be in life.
- Catechists, take some time to learn about:
 - The vocation to chastity (see Fr. Mike Schmitz, Day 305)
 - The integrality of the gift of self (see Fr. Mike Schmitz, Day 306)
 - Catechists: Because this is World Marriage Week, *Radiate Love* is collaborating with Catholic publishers to provide special catechetical sessions for children and young people at every age or preparing for any sacrament. **These should be reviewed and utilized for parish catechesis and Catholic schools in place of the regularly scheduled lesson.**

For Parish Youth Ministry Leaders

The recommendations for PCLs and catechists also apply to parish youth ministry leaders. Because this is World Marriage Week, *Radiate Love* is collaborating with Catholic publishers to provide special catechetical sessions for middle school and high school youth. **These should be reviewed and utilized for parish catechesis and Catholic schools in place of the regularly scheduled lesson.**





For Parish Young Adult Ministry Leaders

The recommendations for PCLs and catechists also apply to parish young adult ministry leaders. This month would be a great time to conduct a session on one or more of these topics:

- The universal call to holiness and the calls to communion, participation, and mission in the Church as the foundation for vocational discernment.
- The total gift of self in love: what is unique about the vocations to marriage, ordained ministry, and consecrated life.
- Watch [The Dating Project](#). Discuss how to prepare for the vocation to marriage.

For Catholic Couples and Parents

Families and couples are encouraged to visit the [Families](#) and [Married Couples](#) sections of the Radiate Love website. In addition, the following resources are on topic this month:

- **USCCB** – [For Your Marriage and Por Tu Matrimonio](#)
 - [The Positive Effects of Premarital Education](#)
 - [Help Your Child Make Friends and Be a Friend](#)
 - [Speaking of Love: From Adolescence to Adulthood](#)
 - [The Joy of “Yes” Forever](#)

