



## Recommendations for Parish Ministries and Families

### For Parish Pastoral Leaders

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

- The deep sense of mutual belonging in marriage is a source of delight, and it comes to fruition in this covenant relationship modeled on the covenant of God with his chosen people: “You shall be called ‘My Delight is in her,’ and your land ‘Espoused’... As a bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so shall your God rejoice in you.” (Isaiah 62:4-5)
- The Church is the Bride of Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit, blessed with charisms ordered to building up the body. (1 Corinthians 12:4-11 and CCC, [796-801](#))
- In recent years, only about 20% of Catholics in California who decide to marry do so sacramentally, based on Census Bureau data and diocesan reports in the Official Catholic Directory. A marriage that is not based on a covenant love is like constructing a home on sand instead of rock. The Holy Spirit enters the marriage through the sacramental grace given by Christ, just as he did in the Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11).
- As Pope Francis says: “The Holy Spirit is He who continues to perform, on a spiritual level, the miracle that Jesus worked on that occasion; namely, to change the water of habit into a new joy of being together... It is what the Holy Spirit has done in so many marriages, when the spouses decided to invoke him.” (General Audience, [Oct. 23, 2024](#))





Sample ideas for parish programs and activities:

- Review the points of contact the parish staff has with couples and parents. For example, baptismal preparation, registering their children for sacraments, community events, etc. Knowing that the vast majority of young Catholics couples are not married sacramentally, set in place procedures to welcome them, encourage them, and share with them the Good News of sacramental marriage if they have not yet taken that step?
- Prepare for your parish's observance of World Marriage Week, February 9-15, 2025. The [Radiate Love website](#) will provide 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.
  - A special *catechetical session* for children and young people at every age or preparing for any sacrament, including a formation session for adults/parents.





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

Catechists and parents should be encouraged to deepen their understanding of God’s plan for couples to live and love abundantly through the sacrament of marriage. As the calendar year begins, it is a great time for PCLs to make sure their catechists have had a chance to view and discuss the [catechist training video](#) for the Radiate Love initiative.

- 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 couples they may know who are in need of a sacramental marriage. This is a great way to radiate God’s love and share the “best wine” with those who are ready for the sacrament (share your parish guide, or the resources from [Witness to Love / Marriage Building USA](#)).
- Catechists, take some time to learn about:
  - The Church as the Bride of Christ (see Fr. Mike Schmitz, Day [112](#))
  - Marriage in the New Covenant (see Fr. Mike Schmitz, Day [220](#))
- Catechists: Incorporate a 5 to 10-minute reflection, discussion, or activity into one of the catechetical sessions this month, drawing from the materials and resources in this *Radiate Love* packet. Some options might include:
  - Select a few verses from the Gospel (the Wedding at Cana, Jn 2:1-11) and do a [lectio divina](#) with the children. Pflaum’s [Gospel Weeklies](#) provides age-appropriate content you may find useful.
  - Use the [Saints of the Month \(Tobiah and Sarah\)](#) as a group conversation starter.
  - Offer gospel-themed coloring pages (i.e. [here](#) and [here](#)) for the younger kids.





### **For Parish Youth 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 myth of marriage and parenthood as paths to unhappiness in life. Solid [research](#) shows the exact opposite!
- It matters to Jesus when the “cup” of married love is running empty: how the Church provides enrichment and accompaniment to married couples, rooted in faith. See this month’s [bulletin insert](#).

### **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:

- What dating is for and how to fix it. Some helpful resources may be found from [FOCUS Catholic](#) or the [Journey to Marriage](#) podcast.
- What it takes to form a lifelong, exclusive, and faithful relationship, open to children from God, and how the Sacrament of Marriage can help us.
- Bring in a guest speaker who can address the differences between a legal marriage license and Catholic sacramental marriage, explaining the benefits of convalidation, marriage enrichment programs, and seeking an annulment when necessary.

### **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](#)
  - [Marital Love Is Like Fine Wine–It Gets Better with Time](#)
  - [The Family is the Masterpiece of Society](#)
  - [Why Marry in the Catholic Church?](#)

