

10th Grade Marriage

OPENING SCRIPTURE

Begin with a short prayer and/or lead a meditation based on the lesson's scripture.

REVIEW OPTION

Tie today's class to the previous vocation lesson or other classes you have been working on.

READING

5-15 min

Goals:

Students should

1. develop a reverence for Holy Matrimony, and
2. be open to praying for God's will in their own lives regarding marriage.

Preparation:

Review chosen resource. Note interesting parts. Choose 2-3 parts to discuss with students.

Instructions:

Time permitting, students might read the entire selection during class, or they could read it for homework before coming to class.

If time is limited, assign one story or part of a story per student or group of students. After each student has read his/her particular selection, go around the group, having each student summarize and comment on the assigned story. Once finished, have the students comment on each other's stories and share what stories most caught their attention, and which aspects of married life seemed most wonderful, or most difficult. (Note: there will likely be overlap between "the most wonderful" and "the most difficult" because some of the best parts of every vocation are the hardest parts. This may be a great topic for further discussion.)

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MARRIAGE

Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, he himself the savior of the body. As the church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. So [also] husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself...

This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church.- EPHESIANS 5:25-28,32 [1]

READING

BLESSED LOUIS AND ZÉLIE MARTIN [2]

Louis (1823-1894) was born in Bordeaux in the south of France, and Zélie (1831-1877) near Alençon, about one hundred miles west of Paris, where both would spend their married lives. Zélie's given name was Marie-Azélie Guérin. The second name, "Azélie", is a kind of flower.



"They were not saintly because they raised a saint; they raised a saint because they were saintly," writes Christopher Lane about this couple, most famous for parenting St. Thérèse of Lisieux, patroness of missions and Coctor of the Church.

Louis had tried a vocation to the priesthood, but decided that, although he had a great desire for God, it was not his calling. He was twenty-three at this time and returned to the study of watch making. He started a business and made a success of it. In his spare time, Louis "loved to read, to swim, to pray, to play billiards, to fish and go for long walks in the country." For the next twelve years he lived an ordered, prayerful, and pleasant bachelor life.

Although weak in health, Zélie was talented, clever, and creative. She had won numerous prizes as a girl for her writing. She had become an expert lacemaker and started her own business with a team of employees, while she designed the patterns, purchased the thread, and organized the assignments. After trying for a religious vocation and not being accepted, she determined she had a vocation to marriage. But Zélie had no one in mind.

Then one day, when Zélie was twenty-seven, she crossed over Alençon's peaceful river Sarthe and noticed a tall, handsome, confident man going in the opposite direction. At this moment she heard a clear voice within her: "This is he whom I have prepared for you." [3] Who was this man? She had never seen him before. Nothing might have happened between Zélie and this man (of course, it was Louis!) if his mother had not been interested in doing a little match-making.

"They were not saintly because they raised a saint; they raised a saint because they were saintly."

[1] Scripture taken from the New American Bible, Revised Edition, available at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible/>. Although this is an easy target for those who would misrepresent the Church as misogynist, a close reading of this passage in full reveals that St. Paul was urging husbands and wives to be mutually docile to each other, as well as mutually supporting. This passage shows the great care a husband should have for his wife: he is to sacrifice himself for her, even as Our Lord sacrificed Himself for the Church by His death. There is a beautiful difference between man and woman, and a reverence for this complementarity is one of the keys to a happy and holy marriage.

[2] Information for this section taken from Maureen O'Riordan, 17 October 2008, http://www.catholic.org/international/international_story.php?id=30127 See also Fr. James Geoghegan, "The Parents of St. Thérèse," Proceedings of the Second Regional Congress, Discalced Carmelite Third Order. San Francisco, 1974, pp. 21-31, reproduced in <http://www.Thérèseoflisieux.org/the-parents-of-st-Thérèse-fr> See also <http://carmelitesisters.ie/blissed-louis-zelie-martin/> as well as <http://www.crisismagazine.com/2013/the-holy-household-of-louis-and-zelie-martin>, and <http://www.carmelite.com/saints/default.cfm?loadref=111>. For letters and references from letters, see also A Call to a Deeper Love: The Family Correspondence of the Parents of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, 1863-1885, translated by Ann Connors Hess, edited by Frances Renda (New York: Alba House, 2011).

[3] From the biography read at the Beatification, October 19, 2008, quoted in <http://www.ocarm.org/en/content/liturgy/bls-louis-and-zelie-martin-parents-Thérèse-lisieux-m>.

Students may write about their thoughts on the story, if discussion seems slow. Allow time for the students to think.

Some discussions starters:

- Were there any words or concepts used with which you weren't familiar? Let's go through those.
- What would be hard about this life? What would be beautiful? If you were there, what would you look forward to? What would you worry about if you were in their shoes?
- Have you ever gone through any experiences like these people (serving the family, being sick, mourning the death of loved ones, being afraid or in danger, standing up for your beliefs, doing work that didn't seem to fit you, experiencing tension with someone you

love, etc.)? What did it feel like? How did you deal with it? Help them connect their experiences to the story, for example: “Ok, so you have felt real fear. It’s a terrible thing. Imagine the fear Fanj Jaggerstatter might have experienced receiving one of Franz’s letters, always wondering if it might be the last.”

- Ask students to share any related experiences in their own lives—examples of the vocation lived well in the lives of people the students know, the struggle to pray, the struggle for virtue, dealing with suffering and sorrow, etc. Emphasize the need to pray for good marriages, and their importance for the good of the world.



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Home of Bl. Louis and Zélie Martin, Birthplace of Saint Thérèse
Image courtesy of Pierre-Yves Emile. Shared under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.

Louis’ mother had seen Zélie at a lacemaking workshop. She knew Zélie’s family, and she arranged a meeting. Within a year the two were engaged, and they were married at midnight on July 13, 1858.

In the first year of their marriage, Louis and Zélie thought it might be good to live as brother and sister, like the Holy Family. But they also decided it would be a good idea to get some advice from a local priest about this decision. Wisely, the priest advised them to embrace the normal form of marriage with joy. We owe their child, St. Thérèse, and the good she did partly to the fact that Louis and Zélie got advice from someone else about their vocation. Of course, the priest’s advice also brought great happiness to the couple. They would have an intimate married life, true affection...and nine children! Louis would write later to Zélie “I kiss you with all my heart, while waiting for the happiness of being with you again...(signed) Your husband and true friend, who loves you for life” (October 8, 1863). And Zélie was to exclaim, “I’m crazy about children, I was born to have them” (December 15, 1872).

The couple ran their businesses from home. later Louis sold his own business to manage Zélie’s increasingly successful one. They were hard workers, prayerful, and loved the Catholic Church. Louis closed the shop on Sunday although other businesses were open, and they cared for ill employees. They attended mass daily at 5:30 AM. They cared for the poor. Louis’ father came to end his days with them, and later so did Zélie’s father. Zélie came to love her father-in-law like her own: when Louis’ father died, she wrote “I would never have believed that

this could have such an effect on me. I’m shattered” (June 27, 1865).

When the Franco-Prussian war broke out, the couple was forced to shelter nine German soldiers. Fr. James Geoghehan describes an incident between Louis and the soldiers:

“One of them stole a watch from the house. Louis saw him, caught him by the nape of the neck, and threw him out. The next day he registered a formal complaint. The day after that he heard of an order that all looters were to be shot, and that a German soldier had already been executed for looting. Immediately, Louis went back to the commanding officer, withdrew his complaint, and asked him not to shoot the thief who had stolen his watch.”

Of Louis and Zélie’s children, both sons and one daughter died as infants; another daughter died near the age of six. The same year Zélie lost her father, she lost her first son.

Five daughters lived; Thérèse was the youngest, born in this little pink house at No. 50, Rue Saint-Blaise. Zélie had lived here with her family before marrying Louis; in 1871 she and Louis moved in. Thérèse’s autobiography talks about toys, trips, gardens, games, Christmas traditions—these parents gave their children a marvelous life.

We get a wonderful picture of Zélie from letters she wrote to her brother, full of jokes, teasing, good advice, and news about daily life. Although there was great suffering, there were also the normal joys of family life. It was a very ordinary family—the kids got sick, had trouble with spelling, liked school, hated school. There were troubles with the business, financial worries, and squabbles in the extended family. When the Martins had guests and visits from relatives, the children wanted to know if they would get to have cake and special drinks. There were times of peace and times of great noise—Zélie writes one time to her brother, “I don’t know what else to tell you because I’m too distracted. I hear everyone talking at the same time” (January 12, 1865).

We get a picture of a marriage with ups and downs. Zélie frets about an aunt coming during some upcoming Catholic fast-days—what kind of meal can Zélie serve when the aunt won’t fast, and Louis insists he will fast (May 16, 1864)? Another time, when Zélie’s brother pokes fun at a mutual friend, Louis thinks it is hilarious. But Zélie doesn’t think it’s one bit funny; she’s worried about the friend (March 5, 1865). Zélie and Louis were not mirror images of each other; they were complimentary.

In one letter Zélie gave her brother some dating advice: “You

“You know all that glitters is not gold.”



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know all that glitters is not gold. The main thing is to look for a good woman whose interests center on the home, who is not afraid of dirtying her hands with work, who devotes time to her appearance only as much as she has to, and who knows how to raise children to work and be holy. A woman like that would scare you; she would not be brilliant enough in the eyes of the world. But sensible people would love her better even if she had nothing, rather than another woman with a dowry of fifty thousand francs and who lacked these qualities.” (July 14, 1864).

After nineteen years of married life, Zélie died of cancer. Louis was with her to the end. Zélie had written once, “I confess, death terrifies me... to think that I will see my family like that or that they will see me!” (June 27, 1865). Zélie died at home surrounded by her family. Thérèse vividly remembers watching her father weep at her mother’s bedside.^[4] The circumstances of Louis and Zélie’s marriage had been very ordinary, but behind the scenes they had shared an extraordinary love.

Louis was left with five children, the youngest only four years old. Louis moved the daughters to be near family. He left his business and friends behind to build a good life for his girls. And it was good. He took the daughters on trips and pilgrimages, made toys for them, gardened, and showered them with affection. When his daughters desired to enter cloistered religious life, he gave his blessing, knowing he would not see them again. In Thérèse’s case he not only gave his blessing, but he became her greatest ally in seeking permission for her to enter religious life at an age younger than usual.

“He accepted this trial, the entire humiliation of which he understood, and he pushed heroism even to not willing that we ask for his cure.”

He had already had one stroke when Thérèse joined the Carmelites. Louis’s physical and mental health continued to deteriorate. Soon he could no longer care for himself. He became unable to recognize his daughters. Several times he



Louis Martin after he was discharged from the Bon Sauveur hospital. Photo taken in 1892 at Rue Labbey, his last home in Lisieux. Léonie is second from the left.

went missing. He would spend three years in a hospital for mental illness. Thérèse wrote to Fr. Maurice Bellière (July 26, 1897) that “He accepted this trial, the entire humiliation of which he understood, and he pushed heroism even to not willing that we ask for his cure.”^[5] Louis’ final stroke paralyzed him. He went home to die. Two daughters, Leonie and Celine, cared for him until the end when he died of a heart attack in 1894. He had been a widower almost as long as he had been married.

In 2008, Louis and Zélie Martin were beatified, being only the second couple in history to receive a dual beatification. They had been heroic in their vocation to marriage. Their daughter Thérèse was to make famous what they had shown: that the extraordinary can be lived within the ordinary.

[4] See Ch. 2 of *Story of a Soul*.

[5] See introduction to *A Call to a Deeper Love: the Family Correspondence of the Parents of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, 1863-1885*, translated by Ann Connors Hess, edited by Frances Renda (New York: Alba House, 2011).



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OPTIONAL READING 1

BLESSED FRANZ JAGERSTATTER (1907-1943)

Franz Jagerstatter lived a wild youth and had a child out of wedlock. Later he returned to his faith and the practice of chastity, married, and had four children. When he refused to serve in the Nazi army, he was imprisoned and eventually executed. For this witness, and for his virtue as a husband and father, he was beatified by Benedict XVI in 2007. ^[6] Here are two letters he wrote to his wife while in prison:



*“We have shared many joys,
and so we want also to do the same
with suffering.”*

Braunau, June 23, 1940... *I received your letter today, which I had awaited with great longing. I opened it with a joyful heart, and read it to the end with a heavy heart. It is hard to see someone suffer, especially when one cannot help. And most especially when it is one’s dearest wife. I ask, dear Fanj, if it is possible, write me often. Spiritual hardships are frequently harder than physical ones, and if one can speak or write a little about everything, then things can become easier for one’s heart. We have shared many joys, and so we want also to do the same with suffering. Dear Fanj, I understand your pain, for I know what it is to feel abandoned by everyone. Therefore, pour out your heart to me for no one—other than God and our heavenly Mother—can better understand your suffering than your beloved husband. I apologize that I must now write with a pencil. The ink has run out. Dear Fanj, do not get discouraged even if it often seems that the Lord God has also forgotten us. It is not so. God wants only to test whether we constantly confess our belief even in suffering. It is indeed true that a person’s character shows itself in suffering. God did not spare his beloved Son from this experience of abandonment. How much less will it be spared us! We must go courageously... once again, have courage, dear Fanj. And do not immerse yourself too much in the work and the worldly concerns. Leave undone what does not go easily. Your first concern must be*

our children, and you cannot carry out with thoroughness both the care of the children and the care of the business. So care for the children and mother. You and I must value them more than the business. I send warm greetings and kisses to you and the children, and I remain concerned about you.

April 9, 1943... *dearest wife, it was seven years ago today that we promised each other love and faithfulness before God and the priest, and I believe that we have faithfully kept this promise. Moreover, I believe that God still confers his grace on us even if we must live apart, so that we can be faithful to this promise until the end of our lives. When I look back and observe all the good fortune and the many graces that have come to us during these seven years, I see that many things often border on being miracles. If someone were to say to me that there is no God or God has no love for us, and, if I were to believe this, I would no longer understand what has happened to me.*

OPTIONAL READING 2

BL. PETER TO ROT (1912-1945) ^[7]

Born in Papua New Guinea as a child of converts, Peter To Rot grew up and became a catechist to young children and adults. He married Paula Ia Varpit when he was 22, and they had three children. During World War II the Japanese invaded, imprisoned all the priests, and outlawed Catholic practices. When the invaders tried to promote polygamy, Peter To Rot preached in defense of marriage, and was arrested, imprisoned, and executed. He was beatified by John Paul II in 1995.



Catholic News Agency ran a story by Fr. Renato Simeone, M.S.C. which originally appeared in *L’Osservatore Romano*, January 25, 1995. It includes this section:

Later, referring to his imprisonment, Peter said: “I am here because of those who broke their marriage vows and because of those who do not want the growth of God’s kingdom.”

[6] Read more letters at Franz Jagerstatter: *Letters and Writings from Prison*, ed. Erna Putz, trans. Robert A. Krieg (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 6, 97). ISBN-13: 978-1570758263. See also this article in *First Things* by William Doyno. <http://www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/2007/10/franz-jagerstatter-martyr-and-moa>

[7] You can read more of his story at <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/resources/jmj-sydney-2008/patron-saints/bls-peter-to-rot/>

DISCUSSION

25-30 min

Note: This background material is provided to help you prayerfully prepare for a lecture, or lead a far-ranging discussion with students.

THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF MARRIAGE

During the marriage rite,^[8] the man and woman are asked whether they have come freely and without reservation, whether they vow to (1) love and honor one another for the rest of their lives, and (2) accept children lovingly from God and bring them up according to the law of Christ and His Church.

They then express these two vows, each promising to be the other's one, faithful spouse:

I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.

Another form is:

I...take you...for my lawful (husband/wife), to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.

Both at the beginning and at the blessing of the rings, the rite explains that “being true” or “having and holding” implies unity and fidelity.

So just what does it look like to live this vocation well?

Goals of this discussion:

It is important to be realistic about what you might face in your vocation. Every life has “highs” and “lows”, and sometimes the lows are the very same things that also bring the highs. This discussion should help students to understand the reality of the difficult and the wonderful aspects of marriage.

The 4th and final lesson of this unit asks students to complete an exercise imagining the best possible life for each of the vocations. Then students are to ask themselves “Which could I live without?” This discussion helps prepare the students by giving them concrete information about the daily experience of Marriage so the students may make a more informed examination of this final question.

Instructions:

List and explain the two parts of the marriage vows (Unity/Exclusivity/Fidelity and Openness to Children). Ask the students to think of some of the “highs and lows” they would expect to encounter living these vows. Some notes follow below for the teacher to facilitate the discussion and prompt the students, if necessary.

DISCUSSION PART I: THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF UNITY / EXCLUSIVITY / FIDELITY—“I WILL LOVE AND HONOR YOU.”

Lows:

- It might be easy to enter a marriage thinking: “Now I will have someone who will always be physically attracted to me, always wants to have sex, always be able to listen to me, comfort me, build me up, agree with what I want, think I’m funny, not be annoyed or hurt with anything I do, never do anything I really hate, never get really sick, never get us into financial difficulties, and who will usually follow my lead.” But marriage is not like this.
- Normal humans get sick and stressed. They hurt each others’ feelings and have misunderstandings. They make mistakes and sin—sometimes badly. They have to eat, sleep, pray, and work. Spouses have to keep each other in mind all the time. They won’t always have their emotional needs met.
- What you would like your marriage to be like is sometimes not possible. Maybe you want kids, but your spouse might be unable to have children.^[9] You want comfort when your spouse is sick or tired, grieving, deployed, or away on work. You want sex, but the good of your spouse and the family means that it is not a good time. Just as priests and religious practice chastity according to their state in life, so married couples must practice “conjugal chastity” (CCC 2349), which is to keep sex in the context of love, always as an expression of love. Sometimes, no matter what you personally want, you must put aside your needs and tend to the needs of your spouse.
- If your spouse changes—becomes abusive or dangerous—the Church does not demand that you keep living together, BUT a valid marriage is still valid, and that person is still your spouse. It can be incredibly hard to care for a spouse or even

[8] Even the 5-minute civil ceremony vows are basically the same. See, for example, this Justice of the Peace ceremony in Connecticut: http://www.donnakingip.com/brief_ceremony.php. Where one spouse is baptized, the marriage is considered sacramental and receives all the graces of a sacramental marriage through the mercy of God.^[5] See introduction to *A Call to a Deeper Love: the Family Correspondence of the Parents of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, 1863-1885*, translated by Ann Connors Hess, edited by Frances Renda (New York: Alba House, 2011).

[9] The Church continues to teach that “A child is not something owed to one, but is a gift. The “supreme gift of marriage” is a human person. A child may not be considered a piece of property, an idea to which an alleged “right to a child” would lead. In this area, only the child possesses genuine rights: the right “to be the fruit of the specific act of the conjugal love of his parents,” and “the right to be respected as a person from the moment of his conception” (CCC 2738). For this reason, the Church does not permit any kind of reproductive technology that disassociates the procreative and sexual act, especially those kinds which involve other people through sperm donation, surrogacy, etc. This can be a real “low” to want children very badly and then put aside that good desire due to infertility, to stay faithful and increasingly loving towards your spouse, finding new and different ways for your love to bear fruit in the world.

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just pray for a spouse from a safe distance, while you yourself have unmet needs and desires. If you feel attractive or lonely or burdened or wanting children, you might be tempted to seek “happiness” in an emotional or even sexual relationship with someone else. The vocation of marriage will demand that you avoid that, that you keep putting your own needs aside and turning your eyes to the needs of your spouse, even from a distance.

Highs:

- The normal Lows of Marriage can be incredibly hard, but there is a marvelous flip side. Truly, how amazing is it for someone to promise to be with you no matter what? Think about receiving that kind of love.
- You don’t have to earn it; you have been given the promise. Even if you grow ugly or sick or stop being funny, if you are not a good listener anymore or never get very sympathetic, whether you remember to give compliments or say thank you—no matter what—this person will never give up on you. He or she will stay with you your whole life long. Even if you lose your reason, or become evil, he or she will never give up on you. No one could deserve that kind of love, yet that is the love promised in marriage. Imagine having someone like that in your life. Imagine being that person for someone else!
- The Church says married love is like an icon of the Trinity; it reveals God’s unconditional love. God does not love us only insofar as we meet His needs. He does not love us only insofar as we are what He wants us to be. He loves us no matter what. And when we are ready to go back to Him, He is waiting for us. That is what spouses promise. We can’t control if the other spouse is going to live up to the promise he made to unconditional love. But we can control ourselves. We can love with that unconditional love. Every time we renew our unconditional love we make it more possible for our spouse to live up to that promise. In fact, every time we renew our unconditional love, we make it more possible for every married person to live up to the vows. We are all linked together through the body of Christ; one person’s renewed commitment strengthens everyone’s ability to commit. ^[10]

- We must always remember that marriage, like the priesthood or religious life, is not about “finding fulfillment” or a passing earthly happiness. It is about giving one’s life to God in a particular way and learning to love as He loves. Real and lasting happiness, fortunately, is by God’s design the effect of accepting one’s vocation, although it does not always look like what movies teach us to expect from marriage.
- Couples who have been married many years can testify to the incredible gift of their bond with one, single, faithful individual committed for life. Couples who have remained true through a spouse’s illness or long absence or even infidelity [11] can testify to experiencing a love like no other. As the Songs of Songs says, “love is as strong as death” (8:6).

DISCUSSION PART II: THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF OPENNESS TO CHILDREN

Lows:

- Pregnancy and labor are difficult, physically and mentally, both for the husband and wife.
- Raising children is always a financial concern.
- Raising children is difficult. They wet their pants and make messes. They must be taught everything and they can cry for a very long time. Children are fragile as well as fallen; they can break their parents’ hearts by their suffering, and also by their sin and disobedience. To raise a child is a great responsibility, often daunting for some.
- Parents can find themselves fighting over how to raise children and can be distracted from building their own relationship by less important concerns with the children, like a worrying over child’s soccer game instead of working out a serious spousal disagreement.

Highs:

- Pregnancy can be a time of joyful anticipation despite its difficulties. Deciding on names, preparing the home, imagining what the baby will look like, etc.
- The Church continues to teach that “Fecundity is a gift,

[10] See Benedict XVI, Spe Salvi for more on this idea: “Our lives are involved with one another, through innumerable interactions they are linked together. No one lives alone. No one sins alone. No one is saved alone. The lives of others continually spill over into mine: in what I think, say, do and achieve. And conversely, my life spills over into that of others: for better and for worse. So my prayer for another is not something extraneous to that person, something external, not even after death. In the interconnectedness of Being, my gratitude to the other—my prayer for him—can play a small part in his purification. And for that there is no need to convert earthly time into God’s time: in the communion of souls simple terrestrial time is superseded. It is never too late to touch the heart of another, nor is it ever in vain. In this way we further clarify an important element of the Christian concept of hope. Our hope is always essentially also hope for others; only thus is it truly hope for me too. As Christians we should never limit ourselves to asking: how can I save myself? We should also ask: what can I do in order that others may be saved and that for them too the star of hope may rise? Then I will have done my utmost for my own personal salvation as well” (Para 48, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi_en.html)

[11] See Philip Howard story in Freshmen Unit, Lesson 1. This is a great example of a marriage that lasted through and grew stronger after infidelity. It is possible! The vocation is possible for anyone God calls to it.

an end of marriage, for conjugal love naturally tends to be fruitful. 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” (CCC 2366) We know this is true when we imagine a holiday without children. Try it. Then imagine instead years with your own potential kids.

- Think of your children when they’re new: their first words, first steps, the funny mispronunciations they make, their pleasure in anything new.
- Imagine them growing older: flying kites, asking questions, decorating Christmas trees, wanting to do what the grown-ups are doing, aspiring to be like “Dad,” to be like “Mom,” learning to read, receiving First Communion, being able to help with chores, saying things that make you laugh, loving things that you love.
- Imagine when they are grown: taking care of you when you are older, mowing the lawn and shoveling the walk, weeping at your funeral, planting flowers on your grave, and praying for you as long as they live.
- Think of them discerning their own vocations and doing great things, marriage and grandchildren, or ordination, or religious life, or a single son or daughter who visits you and prepares a meal and plays cards.
- Children can help married couples be more committed to each other, to realize the importance of their marriage and to work harder at helping each other and their children fulfill their vocations so that they can be happy as God has planned for them.

**ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION
ACTIVITY**

15 min

Every marriage is different, and every day and week is different, but the Couple's "To-Do" List gives a sample snapshot of one week in a married couple's life.

Hand out the Couple's "To-Do" List. Go through the notes and have the students suggest other potential specific events of a married persons' vocation, especially what some highs and lows might be. Students may also refer to examples from the stories.

Notes are given below for the teacher to refer to. Suggested questions and discussion prompts are given in the teacher's version of the handout.

Most marriages can expect these highs and lows. What are some other specific highs and lows you might expect?

- Fertility and children—sometimes inability/difficulty in conceiving, miscarriage, labor, hearing the heart-beat, choosing names, having a boy or a girl, supplying their needs, sharing their joys and sorrows, seeing their successes and failures, and finding their own vocations
- Caring for parents or in-laws and extended family
- The death of one's beloved spouse (usually spouses do not die at the same time; one dies and one is widowed)
- Fighting with and forgiving your spouse over many years; constantly working things out and making it better.

Notice how busy the family is—they have physical needs to meet and family obligations to each other, to kids, and to grandparents. They are involved in the neighborhood, parish, city, state, and country and have obligations there. Notice how treasured such a family would be—they are doing all kinds of things for their family, friends, and neighbors.

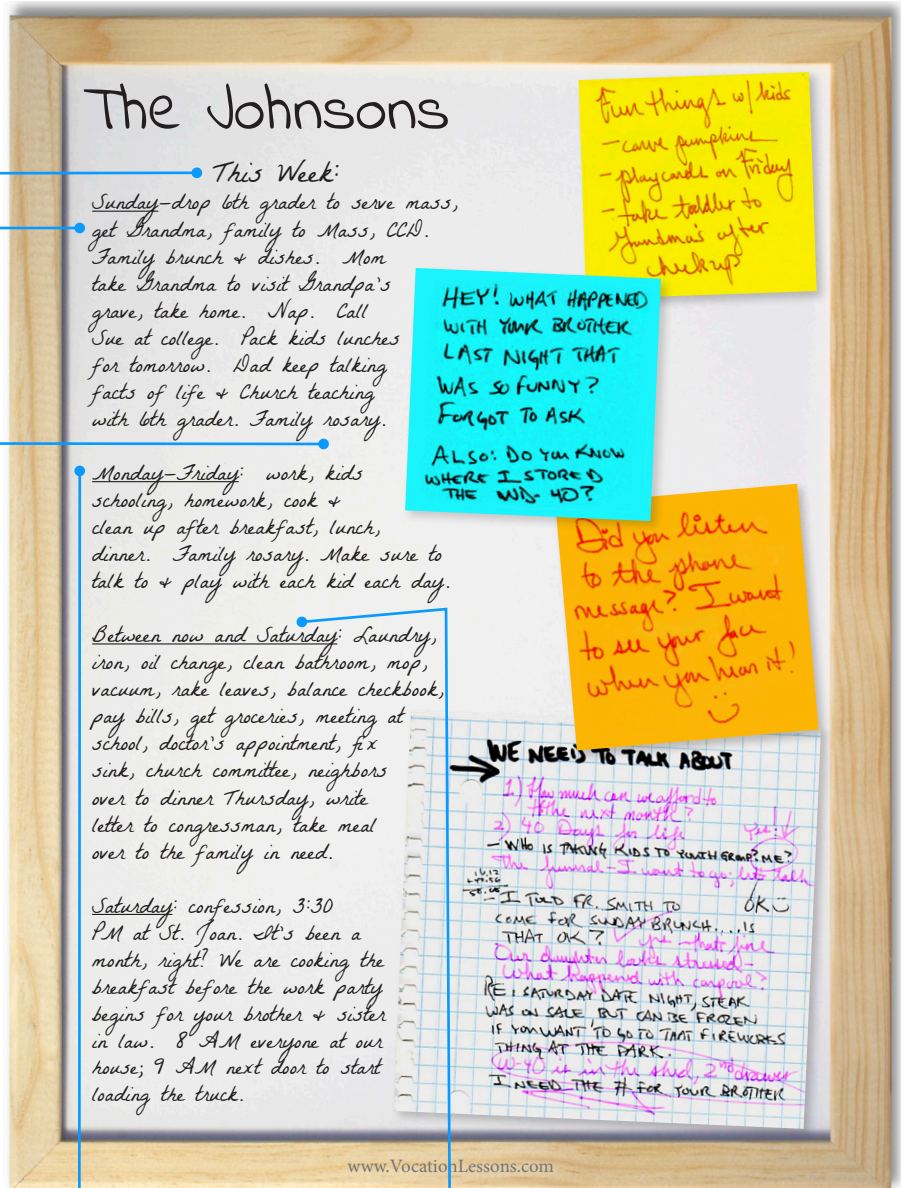
Notice how prayer and learning about the Faith is worked in through the whole week.

Sometimes people get along with their in-laws, and sometimes they don't. But in-laws often come with marriage and are part of loving your spouse. This can be a low.

Interpersonal interaction and mutual service—having it is a high, lacking it a low, giving it both high and low. Giving oneself can be hard!

If nothing goes wrong, this schedule will be very crowded. Now imagine this life with the typical bumps of married life. If Mom has morning sickness from her pregnancy, this will be a lot harder. If any of the kids have a bad day, get sick, or disobey, this week will be a lot harder. If the spouses are fighting this week will be a LOT LOT harder.

Notice in the "We Need to Talk About" section how the spouses are planning something romantic at the same time they are also worried about the family. Marriage includes the big picture—joy and sorrow are mixed.



CLOSING

10-15 min

Instructions:

Discuss with students the necessity of living the Christian virtues in order to successfully live the vocation of Marriage, in particular Chastity and Hope in God's mercy to return to purity.

Along with these closing points, an optional story is provided.

DISCUSSION

If we want to support strong marriages and be better prepared for marriage should God call us, we need to practice the virtues. All the virtues are needed to support marriage, but two especially important virtues are **Chastity** and **Hope in God's mercy**.

CHASTITY

- Our sexuality is a great gift; if possible, it is best to give this gift once, either to God or to our chosen spouse. When we preserve our virginity, we aren't giving something up; we're giving the gift of our sexuality back to the Lord, the one who gave it to us: we're saying—"You gave me everything, Lord, from my soul to my passions, from my mind to my body. And since You asked me, I'm going to give all of that back to You."
- Many prayers, including prayers at Mass, refer to Heaven being full of holy virgins. Priests, religious, single people, and younger people don't preserve their virginity because they hate sex or people of the opposite sex. Rather, because they do think sexuality is great, they offer it as a gift to God forever, or to protect it until He helps them find a good spouse to whom they can give this gift. If you have the virtue of chastity before marriage, you will find it easier to practice fidelity and self-control after you are married, never using your spouse, never seeking else-



MARRIAGE



The Attainment: The Vision of the Holy Grail to Sir Galahad, Sir Bors, and Sir Perceval

Sir Edward Burne-Jones, overall design and figures; William Morris, overall design and execution; John Henry Dearle, flowers and decorative details. 1895-96

CLOSING

FROM THE LEGENDS OF KING ARTHUR

In a dark time, plagued with highway robbery, kidnapping, and theft, King Arthur is said to have gathered a band of brave followers. As the legends tell, it was a golden age. King Arthur restored peace to the land. Widows were defended, orphans cared for, wrongs righted, justice established.

Then Lancelot's adultery with Arthur's wife Guinevere split the kingdom in two. In many movies, this "forbidden love" gets treated sympathetically—as if it's just so sad that it wasn't easier for Lancelot and Guinevere to get together. Lancelot is brave and strong—about the greatest hero ever to walk; he can do anything. And Guinevere is the beautiful queen. That's how many movies tell it.

But let's put ourselves in Arthur's shoes. He and Guinevere had real affection for each other in the early years of their marriage. Arthur was passionately in love with her. Lancelot was Arthur's best friend. Imagine how horrible it would be to find out your own best friend had stolen the person you were in love with; and then imagine if your enemies also found out and used it to destroy your reputation and everything you cared about. Arthur never stopped loving Guinevere, and he never abandoned her. It makes you love Arthur all the more when you read about how committed he was.

Lancelot's offense was a terrible thing, and the older legends of King Arthur call it a terrible thing. In addition, those older legends talk about what Lancelot lost by his sin. They don't tell the story as if the saddest thing was Lancelot's forbidden love. The saddest thing in the old legends is the fact that Lancelot would not repent.

Before the sin is revealed and the kingdom falls apart, at the height of the good times, Arthur's followers are given a chance to see if they can find the very chalice Christ used at the Last Supper, the legendary Holy Grail. Peace reigns, and the knights are brave and adventurous. They are all eager to see if they can find this precious relic and honor it.

What's interesting about this story, is that it becomes clear that only the best knights will get to see the grail. And "best" isn't just the most physically strong—"best" means being strong in soul, specifically, pure. The knights are told: "keep your body as undefiled as the day Our Lord made you a knight, so that you may come pure and unsullied before the Holy Grail, and without stain of lechery. Where is that knight who can boast so fair an exploit?"^[12]

Out of many knights, the purest knights get closest to the Grail: Galahad, Perceval, and Bors.

[12] *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, translated by P. M. Matarasso (New York: Penguin Books, 1969), 102.

where for sexual pleasure, but keeping sex as an expression of your undying love.

- A story to consider concerns the old legends of King Arthur. Every time someone stays pure, he is closer to real happiness. At the same time, his struggle serves marriages and the whole world. Lancelot's story shows how a failure in chastity hurts everyone. (See story in student section.)

HOPE IN GOD'S MERCY AND RETURNING TO PURITY

- All of us have sinned; Christ came for the sinner. There is still hope for those who have lost their virginity. St. Mary Magdalen, St. Augustine, and Bl. Charles de Foucauld all lost their virginity and struggled with purity for years, but in the end, through the grace of God, they conquered. They became models of purity and great saints.



MARRIAGE

Galahad has preserved his virginity. Perceval has also preserved his, but he's had to fight. Bors has lost his virginity, but then repented and struggled to live chastely since then. These three actually get to come in the presence of the Grail at a beautiful and sacred Mass. And it's beautiful in the story to see that, not only is perfect purity rewarded, but also repentance and the return to purity.

But Lancelot is not like Bors. Lancelot's is never willing to repent and stop sinning. He feels bad, but he doesn't actually want to stop committing adultery with Guinevere and betraying his best friend. So he can't see the Grail, because he is not really sorry.

The legend tells us that Lancelot gets close to the secret location of the Holy Grail. He even sees the Grail in a vision but he can't do anything or even move—it's as if he's asleep—either because he's tired or "from the weight of some sin that lay on him".^[13] When he wakes up he wants to see the Grail, and suddenly he hears a voice: "Lancelot, harder than stone, more bitter than wood, more barren and bare than the fig tree, how durst thou presume to venture there where the Holy Grail abides? Get thee hence, for the stench of thy presence fouls this place".^[14]

Lancelot is overwhelmed with sorrow. He curses the day he was born. He never forgets those words. He realizes why, he, Lancelot, the greatest knight of all is forbidden to see the Grail. He says, "Ah! God, my sin and the wickedness of my life now stand revealed. Now I see that above all else my weakness has been my undoing. For when I should have mended my ways,

then did the enemy destroy me, blinding me so effectually that I could not discern the things of God. Nor should I marvel that I am blind, for there has not passed an hour since I was first a knight but the murk of mortal sin has lapped me close, for more than any other I have given myself to lust and to the depravity of this world."^[15]

*"Keep your body as undefiled as the day
Our Lord made you a knight,
so that you may come pure and
unsullied before the Holy Grail, and
without stain of lechery."*

All Lancelot has to do is repent, but he will not. Catholics in the Middle Ages understood holiness is not necessarily about being completely without sin. If Lancelot had repented like Bors and turned, he would have been allowed to see his heart's desire. From the beginning of the Church, it's always been possible for a Mary Magdalen, Augustine, or Bors to repent and turn to God. The tellers of this legend would have agreed with Pope Benedict XVI's words:

"Among the saints there are oppositions. This is a great consolation for me personally. . . . we see the saints have not fallen from heaven. They are men like us with complicated problems. Holiness does not consist in not making mistakes or never sinning. Holiness grows with the capacity for conversion, for repentance, willingness to begin again, and above all, with the capacity for reconciliation and forgiveness. . . . We are not made saints because we never make mistakes but because of our capacity to forgive and reconcile." (Pope Benedict XVI, Papal Audience, 31 January 2007).

*"Holiness does not consist in not making mistakes or never sinning.
Holiness grows with the capacity for conversion, for
repentance, willingness to begin again,
and above all, with the capacity for reconciliation and forgiveness..."*

[13] *Ibid.*, 83.

[14] *Ibid.*, 85.

[15] *Ibid.*, 85-86.



MARRIAGE

HOMework

Make three lists about your future spouse, as described below. Keep your list to essentials—God surprises us sometimes. Mother Teresa thought she had a teaching vocation and turned out to have a call to serving the poorest of the poor.

You might think you need to marry a quiet blonde—while God has planned for you a loud and laughing brunette who is a good woman. You might think you want to marry a handsome, athletic guy, and instead there is this plain-looking, hard-working, funny guy who is a good man. Sometimes what we want doesn't matter, and sometimes what we want comes packaged differently than we expected.

Remember also that part of the purpose of marriage is working together towards God. Good candidates for a future spouse don't have to be perfect—but they do need to show some tangible evidence that they are seriously working towards the good.^[16]

List 1: What I want in a future spouse.

List 2: What I would want in a future spouse when we are 75 years old.^[17]

List 3: What I DO NOT want in a spouse at any time.

After you've made your lists, take a look at "The Dump Him/Her List" below and compare with your lists. Think about or answer these questions:

1. Which qualities should be red flags right away?
2. Based on the lists you made, would you be avoiding what Evert says to avoid?
3. If Evert made a "Must-haves" list, an opposite of "The Dump Him List", would there be overlap between her list and yours? What do you think you'd both agree on?
4. Are there some things on your list that don't matter as much?
5. What do you think are the top 3 essential qualities? If you date, what qualities should you be looking for first?

[16] The USCCB blog For Your Marriage suggests that every couple has got to figure out the following topics before they get married. Must-Have Conversations: Spirituality/Faith, Conflict Resolution Skills, Careers, Finances, Intimacy/Cohabitation, Children, Commitment. What do you hope for in these areas—what do you hope for in a spouse regarding these issues?

[17] Making this list will help you take a fresh look at the first list. At the age of 75, physical attraction, athletic ability, great job, fertility are not really on the table like they are at the age of 20 or 30—so what else do you want in a spouse?



MARRIAGE

“Back in high school, I was in and out of a lot of bad relationships. The problem was, it was because I was so confused. So what I came up with was a ‘Dump Him’ List, so it’s really clear if you are in a good relationship or not. And if you are in a bad relationship that has any of these qualities, have the courage to be honest with yourself and to get out.” - Crystalina Evert

THE DUMP HIM LIST ^[18]

by Crystalina Evert

1. If you have to tell him more than once to stop
2. You feel the need to fix him
3. He looks at pornography
4. He hits you, pushes you, or does anything that frightens you
5. He gets drunk or takes drugs
6. He doesn't care if you lie to your family
7. He leads you away from God
8. He puts you down and acts like he's kidding
9. He cheats on you, lies to you, and flirts with other girls
10. He uses guilt to get you to do what he wants
11. He always resents the time you spend with your family
12. Is he accountable for his actions, or does he blow it off and even turn it around on you?
13. Is the relationship holding you back from being the person you know you need to become, and is it dictating who you are?
14. He behaves badly and then blames things that happen to him on other people
15. He can't stand on their own two feet without you
16. You can't stand on your own two feet and remain pure with him

THE DUMP HER LIST

1. She doesn't seem to have any boundaries with sexuality, or even encourages you to get physical.
2. You feel the need to fix her
3. She obsesses with fashion and how she looks.
4. She makes scenes—screaming, throwing things, even hitting or scratching. Or she pouts for days, refuses to tell you what is wrong, then blows up and drags up old issues.
5. She gets drunk or takes drugs
6. She leads you away from God
7. She puts you down or belittles you—to your face, with their friends, or behind your back
8. She cheats on you, lies to you, or flirts with other boys
9. She uses guilt or tears to get you to do what she wants
10. She always resents the time you spend with your family
11. She never seems happy to see you, never initiates interaction, never wants to talk about where your relationship is going, acts like she wants to break up though she might not actually say that out loud
12. She is always in crisis
13. Is the relationship holding you back from being the person you know you need to become, and is it dictating who you are?
14. She behaves badly and then blames things that happen to her on other people
15. She can't stand on her own two feet without you
16. You can't stand on your own two feet and remain pure with him

As Crystalina Evert says,

“These are not minor faults; they are signs of a disastrous future marriage. And if you have a hard time breaking away from a person, get a break-up buddy, get a close family member or a friend so they can help you through this and just know that God has something better for you.”

[18] You can watch the video of Chrystalina Evert's "The Dump Him List" at http://youtu.be/6Rprdk3_U0U