



# MARRIAGE

*“Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, love is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” - 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7 <sup>[1]</sup>*

## CLASS DISCUSSION: “REMOTE PREPARATION” FOR MARRIAGE

### PREPARING FOR MARRIAGE

#### Before You Meet Someone

How can you prepare for marriage now, even though it may be years before you get married?

- 1. Practice chaste dating.**<sup>[2]</sup> You will need a good head on your shoulders to discern marriage and whom to marry. Don't get swept up by physical attraction and let it trick you into putting up with someone who turns out to be a jerk. If you make good decisions and remain chaste now, it will be much easier to avoid an unhealthy relationship which leads to a bad marriage. You'll be free to find a good spouse, and you will have the great happiness of marrying someone who is awesome.
- 2. Get your prayer life in order.** Ultimately, marriage is supposed to be an image of the Holy Trinity in the world. This is because the Trinity is a unity of Persons bound perfectly by love. If you had a marriage like that, you would be incredibly happy. But that is going to be hard if you don't pray much. If the kind of people you date don't pray and don't really care whether you pray, then it will be impossible for you as a couple to model the Trinity.
- 3. Practice good relationships.** Pray for and find a good friend (could be a peer or sibling) and work on making a great friendship that will last. Avoid being passive-aggressive; instead, work out problems. Practice saying you are sorry. Keep the friendship going, even when you start to feel bored in the friendship, and try to make it rich again when it lags. Practice loving this person out of loyalty and gratitude for the past, not only when it is fun. Practice compromising and being courteous. Try to sacrifice; avoid being needy. Many, many people find that having a plain, unromantic, unphysical friendship is excellent preparation for marriage, since a lot of marriage is simply relating to another human being over a long



*It's crucial for a husband and wife to pray together.*

- period of time. If you can do this with a friend, moving past misunderstanding and hurts with no distracting physical attraction, you will have a very good preparation for relating to your spouse when you are attracted as well as when you are not. If you cannot do this, you will not be very happy being married.
- 4. Find a “confidante” in a parent, priest, or other trusted adult.** If you have problems in your family, or have made mistakes, find someone to talk to about these and get help long before you ever marry. A future spouse is your partner, not your caretaker. If your future spouse is missing some vital information about you, he/she will not be able to make the free, fully informed decision that marriage requires. It is a real mistake to think we can fix our problems on our own, or that major problems won't affect our marriage. It would be very unfair to hide something from a future spouse until after the vows were said. You might feel like you can handle the problems, but your spouse might not be able to handle it. Don't wait to find out. Deal with problems now.

[1] Scripture taken from the New American Bible, Revised Edition, available at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible/>

[2] See Juniors' Unit handout in the Resources Section.



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## CLASS DISCUSSION: “REMOTE PREPARATION” FOR MARRIAGE

### After You Meet Someone

This is a true story. A man had a wonderful marriage, and then his wife died. Later he met another wonderful lady, and had a second wonderful marriage. He said once, “I don’t believe in “The One”. You can make a marriage work with a lot of people. I have had two wonderful marriages.”

This is good news—you don’t have to pressure yourself to find “the one and only in the entire world”; you just need to discern if a particular one you have met could be a person you could marry and be happy with.

Here are some tips for determining if you might be a good match:

- 1. Consult family and friends.** They love and know you. Do they admire the person you are dating? Do they think he/she is good for you? Family and friends are your allies. Ponder what they have to say about someone you are starting to fall in love with, even if what they say might be painful. Arrange interaction between your family, friends, and the person you are dating—that way family and friends can make an informed judgment. And you can see if this person loves you and your roots, or just has a silly idealized image of *you-all-alone* (as if you exist in a vacuum and won’t ever want to go out with your friends or visit home for Christmas.
- 2. Discern whether this is the right person.** Don’t put fake timelines or demands on the vocation of marriage. Many, many people regret “settling” for someone they didn’t really admire because of bad reasons, like:
  - A. Everyone else is getting married;
  - B. My parents got married at this age;
  - C. Well, we’ve been dating a while; marriage is the next step;
  - D. If we don’t marry, we will split up;
  - E. I don’t want to be single;
  - F. We slept with each other or we’re pregnant. (Sex before marriage is a sin like any sin; if we repent, God will have mercy on us. It is not a sign that God is calling you to marry this person you sinned with. Marrying does not restore your honor; Confession restores you. Marriage is a vocation. You need good reasons to marry this person. Having sex or getting pregnant is not a good reason. You might think the child deserves a mother and a father, and you would be right. But you need to be sure that you and the



*Be careful about priorities. Is a career really more important than a family?*

- other person would be good parents— and it is difficult to be good parents if you are not good spouses. Adoption is a wonderful choice; many couples pray for such a chance.)
- G. The “biological clock” is ticking. (i.e. “*I am not getting any younger and want to have kids before it’s too late.*” This is certainly a very hard thing especially for women to deal with. It’s too bad our culture seems to encourage using the 20s to focus on a career and the 30s to marry and have children. In the 30s, a woman’s fertility begins to taper off. If a woman wants to have children, she might feel like she must “hurry and find someone.” Even though this is understandable, it sets people up to settle for disastrous marriages. Children are not a right. Children are a gift, and they have a right to be the fruit of a loving union of man and wife. It really would be better to be unmarried and childless, doing God’s will, than to try to get around God and rush into a miserable marriage. A better alternative is to discern marriage and pursue it at a prudent time—that is, when you can serve your spouse and be open to children. This can be as early as late adolescence or early 20s. Don’t let establishing financial security or a career delay marriage if you feel God is calling you to marriage. Some people delay marriage for “financial security”. However, this is an almost impossible goal because we are not in control of the economy or the future. It is wise to think about finances, surely, but be careful not to put too much emphasis on financial security. Be balanced, get advice, especially from older generations, and think about what you really need to raise a family.



# MARRIAGE

## CLASS DISCUSSION: “REMOTE PREPARATION” FOR MARRIAGE

Some people (mainly women) delay marriage for a career. However, many people find that having a good career depends just as much on life experience, connections, and being able to learn, as it does on working in the field. Many people start a great career later in life without having had to work in that field in their 20s. Sometimes the career they had in their 20s is not the career they want in their 50s, so it doesn't even matter where or whether they worked in their 20s. If a woman is called to be a wife and mother, focusing on that in her 20s will make it easier to choose the right man with patience; the biological clock is not “ticking” and making her feel rushed. And focusing on the vocation to wife and mother in her 20s will not put her behind others in the career field because she will be gaining life experience, connections, and learning constantly. Returning to school or job training is possible at any age, but having a child is not.

If you are called to marriage, think seriously how you want to use your 20s. That said, it is perfectly fine to marry in your 30s or later. But do not settle for just anyone in order to have children. That would not be worth it in the end, and there are many other ways to help and be around children.

**3. Look for that Transfiguration moment.** Writing about marriage, Alice von Hildebrand said that a spouse gets through hard times (which will always come—that's just part of life) through the memory of a “Transfiguration moment.”<sup>[3]</sup> When the apostles were suffering, the memory of seeing Christ in His glory with Moses and Elijah consoled and strengthened them. When a spouse is having a hard time, he/she needs to look back and remember when the other spouse had a really great mo-

ment—was wise, kind, loving, sacrificing, patient, brave, or heroic. The apostles saw that Christ was AWESOME.

If you are dating, look for that moment when you see the soul of the other person and realize, “My goodness, this person is AWESOME!” Don't look for it in physical attractiveness, or the fact that the other person flatters you, buys you things, or anything small like that. It needs

to be an epic moment. You must be filled with admiration, with wonder. You will find this in praying together, serving together, having a deep conversation or interacting with the community. Arrange or ask for this interaction—not just movies and dinner—so there is opportunity for this moment to come. If this Transfiguration moment never happens, you might want to take a step back from the relationship. In marriage, the spouses have to respect and admire each other a lot; they have to be able to say at least sometimes, “You are my hero.” *If you can't ever say that, the relationship is probably not worth pursuing.*



*Christian Service is a great opportunity to be inspired by your potential spouse – a “Transfiguration Moment”.*

[3] Alice von Hildebrand, *By Love Refined: Letters to a Young Bride*, (Manchester, NH: Sophia Press, 1989, 12).



# MARRIAGE

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## ROLE-PLAY: OFFERING ADVICE ON DATING AND MARRIAGE

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Imagine you are close friends with a person who is having difficulty in his or her dating relationship. See scenarios below. What would you recommend for the people in these relationships? What do they need to talk about? How could the relationship be improved? Or would it be better to break up? Why?

If you're not sure what to recommend, you can refer to the Tough Topics pages:

- Cohabitation
- Contraception
- Faithful...Forever? (regarding fear of divorce)
- Must-Have Conversations

### SCENARIO I

*Dear Journal,*

*I'm dating a guy who sometimes wants to get more physical than I want to. It's hard to say no, because sometimes I have given in when I felt like it, but then I feel so guilty for telling him "no" later when I don't feel like it. It's like a double standard; who am I to say "no"?*

*Also, I feel like he really likes me in a way no one ever has before, but if I didn't give in, he would start looking for someone else. I am also really worried about if I were to get pregnant. Meanwhile, I'm thinking if I just get on the pill, I'll be less scared. But my main problem is that I don't want to be this physical, but I don't want to lose him. What if I never find anyone else?*

### SCENARIO II

*Dear Journal,*

*I'm dating a girl who's got everything - good looks and brains, she's funny and popular. She is on track to have a really great career and will be graduating soon. I am not sure what she sees in me. Some days I feel like we have a lot in common—we both like Chinese food, the same movies, music. Other days, I feel like this will never work. I always feel like somehow I have disappointed her. She gets mad, and I can never figure out why. She hates my friends; she thinks they are ignorant and rude. She doesn't like my family, doesn't want me to spend time with them, and doesn't like visiting them herself. She has said if we get married we will have to live near her family, not mine.*

*She is very talented and smart, but I wish she did not look down on my mom for being a stay-at-home mom and having five kids. She said something like, "I would never do that!" But I hope she doesn't really mean that, because everyone wants some kids. My family had a lot of good times growing up.*

*If she gets the job she is hoping for, she will need to move. She has already said she can't do a long-distance relationship, so I will have to decide what I really want... what do I really want?*

### SCENARIO III

*Dear Journal,*

*I am in love with a good guy, but we've been dating for five years. I'm 29 and I'm starting to get worried about never getting married and having kids. People have told me to give him an ultimatum or break up. But when I ask, "Where is this going?" he tries to avoid the subject.*

*His parents had a terrible divorce when he was twenty. One time he said something like this made him really doubt whether he would be able to stay true to me. But he really wants to stay true. He just wants to go slow and take our time thinking. But I think this is too slow. I'm scared to break up since I have invested so much time in this relationship and I don't want to start over. What should I do?*





# MARRIAGE

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## ROLE-PLAY: THE RITE OF MARRIAGE

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*\*\*Narrator reads italicized parts: The rite of marriage begins after the homily. All stand, including the bride and bridegroom, and the priest addresses them in these or similar words:*



### STATEMENT OF INTENTIONS

**Priest:** My dear friends, you have come together in this church so that the Lord may seal and strengthen your love in the presence of the Church's minister and this community. Christ abundantly blesses this love. He has already consecrated you in baptism and now he enriches and strengthens you by a special sacrament so that you may assume the duties of marriage in mutual and lasting fidelity. And so, in the presence of the Church, I ask you to state your intentions.

**Narrator:** *The priest then questions them about their freedom of choice, faithfulness to each other, and the acceptance and upbringing of children.*

**Priest:** Have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?

**Bride and Groom:** We have.

**Priest:** Will you love and honor each other as man and wife for the rest of your lives?

**Bride and Groom:** We will.

**Priest:** Will you accept children lovingly from God and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?

**Bride and Groom:** We will.

### CONSENT

**Narrator:** *The priest invites the couple to declare their consent.*

**Priest:** Since it is your intention to enter into marriage, join your right hands, and declare your consent before God and his Church.

**Narrator:** *They join hands.*

**Groom:** I, (Name), take you, (Name), for my lawful 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.

**Bride:** I, (Name), take you, (Name), for my lawful husband, 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.

**Priest:** You have declared your consent before the Church. May the Lord in his goodness strengthen your consent and fill you both with his blessings. What God has joined, men must not divide.

**All:** Amen.

### BLESSING AND EXCHANGE OF RINGS (OPTION 1)

**Priest:** May the Lord bless these rings which you give to each other as the sign of your love and fidelity.

**All:** Amen.

**Narrator:** *The bridegroom places his wife's ring on her ring finger.*

**Groom:** (Name), take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Narrator:** *The bride places her husband's ring on his ring finger.*

**Bride:** (Name), take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Narrator:** *The Mass continues with the General Intercessions, then the Liturgy of the Eucharist.*

*(Role-play may end here, or continue with the last part of the rite as in the wedding Mass.)*



# MARRIAGE

## ROLE-PLAY: THE RITE OF MARRIAGE

### BLESSING AND EXCHANGE OF RINGS (OPTION 1) *continued*

**Narrator:** *All continues as in a regular Mass until the Lord's Prayer. The Priest, standing and facing the bride and bridegroom, invokes upon them God's blessing.*

**All:** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

**Narrator:** *The bride and bridegroom remain at their place and kneel. The Priest, with hands joined, calls upon those present to pray, saying:*

**Priest:** Dear brothers and sisters, let us humbly pray to the Lord that on these his servants, now married in Christ, he may mercifully pour out the blessing of his grace and make of one heart in love (by the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood) those he has joined by a holy covenant.

**Narrator:** *All pray in silence for a while. Then the Priest, with hands extended over the bride and bridegroom, continues:*

**Priest:** O God, who by your mighty power created all things out of nothing, and, when you had set in place the beginnings of the universe, formed man and woman in your own image, making the woman an inseparable helpmate to the man, that they might no longer be two, but one flesh, and taught that what you were pleased to make one must never be divided;

O God, who consecrated the bond of Marriage by so great a mystery that in the wedding covenant you foreshadowed the Sacrament of Christ and his Church; O God, by whom woman is joined to man and the companionship they had in the beginning is endowed with the one blessing not forfeited by original sin nor washed away by the flood.

Look now with favor on these your servants, joined together in Marriage, who ask to be strengthened by your blessing. Send down on them the grace of the Holy Spirit and pour your love into their hearts, that they may remain faithful in the Marriage covenant. May the grace of love and peace abide in your daughter, and let her always follow the example of those holy women whose praises are sung in the Scriptures. May her husband entrust his heart to her,

so that, acknowledging her as his equal and his joint heir to the life of grace, he may show her due honor and cherish her always with the love that Christ has for his Church. And now, Lord, we implore you: may these your servants hold fast to the faith and keep your commandments; made one in the flesh, may they be blameless in all they do; and with the strength that comes from the Gospel, may they bear true witness to Christ before all; may they be blessed with children, and prove themselves virtuous parents, who live to see their children's children. And grant that, reaching at last together the fullness of years for which they hope, they may come to the life of the blessed in the Kingdom of Heaven. Through Christ our Lord.

**All:** Amen.

**Narrator:** *Mass continues as normal until the final blessing.*

**Priest:** May God the eternal Father keep you of one heart in love for one another, that the peace of Christ may dwell in you and abide always in your home.

**All:** Amen.

**Priest:** May you be blessed in your children, have solace in your friends and enjoy true peace with everyone.

**All:** Amen.

**Priest:** May you be witnesses in the world to God's charity, so that the afflicted and needy who have known your kindness may one day receive you thankfully into the eternal dwelling of God.

**All:** Amen.

**Narrator:** *The Priest blesses all the people, adding:*

**Priest:** And may almighty God bless all of you, who are gathered here, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

**All:** Amen.

move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned,<sup>4</sup> but have not love, I gain nothing. <sup>4</sup> Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; <sup>5</sup> it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. <sup>7</sup> Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. <sup>8</sup> Love never ends; as for prophecies,



# MARRIAGE

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## HOMEWORK

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Write a letter to your potential future spouse. In this letter, address some or all of the following points:

- What I hope for your future.
- What experiences and people I hope will come to you and help you.
- What virtues I hope you are working on.
- What I pray you be spared from.
- What I want for you at the hour of your death and the world beyond.
- If you are only a potential future spouse, and we end up following different vocations, what I pray for you and your future.
- Include a short prayer for him/her.