

9th Grade: Marriage

OPENING SCRIPTURE

5-7 min

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

On their wedding night Tobiah arose from bed and said to his wife, "Sister, get up. Let us pray and beg our Lord to have mercy on us and to grant us deliverance." Sarah got up, and they started to pray and beg that deliverance might be theirs.

They began with these words: "Blessed are you, O God of our fathers; praised be your name forever and ever. Let the heavens and all your creation praise you forever. You made Adam and you gave him his wife Eve to be his help and support; and from these two the human race descended. You said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; let us make him a partner like himself.' Now, Lord, you know that I take this wife of mine not because of lust, but for a noble purpose. Call down your mercy on me and on her, and allow us to live together to a happy old age."

They said together, "Amen, amen."

- TOBIT 8:4B-8 ^[1]

REVIEW OPTION

8-10 min

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

MARRIAGE

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READING

STS. HADRIAN AND NATALIA (C. 306) ^[2]

The story of this married couple is very ancient and is preserved in medieval collections of saint stories to this day. The basic historical facts are these: that Hadrian died in Emperor Diocletian's persecution around 306 in Nicomedia ^[3] and that his remains were transferred to the site of the Ancient Roman forum where the church of S. Adriano al Foro still stands. This is the story that has been handed down through the centuries.

Natalia was a secret Christian during the Diocletian persecution. Her husband, Hadrian, was a non-Christian and a soldier in the Herculian Guard (bodyguard) of the emperor Galerius Maximian. One day he was overseeing the torture and execution of some Christians. He was amazed by their courage, and asked them what they hoped to gain by such suffering. They told him, "eye has not seen nor has ear heard what things God has prepared for those who love him." ^[4] Hadrian was struck to the heart; he announced then and there that he, too, wanted to become Christian. He was immediately imprisoned.

When Natalia heard the news, she was overwhelmed partly by sorrow at his imprisonment, but mostly with joy at his conversion. She had never expected this! It can be very hard for someone not to be able to share the Catholic Faith and love of

God with a spouse. Natalia went to visit Hadrian in jail and told him her secret, and how proud and happy she was about his conversion. She encouraged him to stay strong.

When it came time for Hadrian to be executed, he was permitted to return home under house arrest to say goodbye to his wife. A servant ran ahead to tell Natalia that Hadrian was coming, but she could not think why he would be returning except that he had renounced his conversion. She began to weep with sadness; and when Hadrian came, she was so disappointed, she actually locked the door. He was pretty shocked, crying out, "Natalia, what are you doing this for?"

Natalia said, "How could you give up so much good? What did I do to deserve being married to a traitor?" When Hadrian realized what Natalia was thinking, it was almost kind of funny—and he had to explain to her. In fact, he had to explain to her several times; she didn't believe him at first. "No, Natalia, I'm going to my execution!"

"Go away," she said, "I want to die!" And he kept trying to convince her (through the door!) until finally he said, "Woman, you better let me in, because this is the last time you're going to see me!" Then Natalia realized what was really going on. With surprise, tears, embarrassment, apology, tenderness—

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

[2] Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. by Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 531-535. See also <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07105a.htm>.

While the Church does not ascribe any historical authenticity to these legends, there has never been any determination that these stories and others like them are false. Suffice it to say, the Church still honors St. Hadrian, and his stories were collected and transcribed as worthy of imitation by Jacobus de Voragine sometime before 1298. Jacobus de Voragine was a Dominican and a bishop and beatified by Pius VII in 1816. Certainly, this is one of the best stories in the collection, and remains worthy of imitation. And it gives a wonderful sample of what the Middle Ages thought a good marriage looked like—ardent, romantic, courageous, risk-taking, encouraging, focused on God to the end.

[3] Modern day Izmit, Turkey.

[4] This is a line from 1 Corinthians 2:9.

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

READING

10-15 min

OVERVIEW:

Discuss stories of heroic marriage using one or both of the provided stories.

Optional research component: find out more about these historic figures.

GOALS:

Students will:

- communicate a reverence for marriage as a vocation,
- pray for people called to marriage,
- foster an awareness for marriage as a possible vocation in their own lives.

PREPARATION:

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

INSTRUCTIONS:

Stories may be assigned as homework before the lesson, read aloud or silently in class, or even paraphrased and retold. Students may be assigned parts of the stories individually or in groups to redeliver (each group or individual sharing a part) to the class.

- *Option A:* Have a brief class discussion about the story. Encourage students to comment and share what part stories most caught their attention.
- *Option B:* Have students write out their thoughts on the story.



MARRIAGE

READING *continued*



The Martyrdom of St. Hadrian
Painting by Adrien Sacquespée, 1659

she opened the door to him, embraced him, and kissed him. It is hard to describe this parting. Never had she loved him so much, though her love was about to see greater trials.

Hadrian returned to prison and a terrible period of daily torture began for him and his companions. Natalia nursed him every day. Daily the prisoners were racked and beaten, and asked if they would renounce their faith. But Hadrian held strong and Natalia kept encouraging him.

On the 7th day, Hadrian was beaten so badly that "his bowels spilled out." (Medical conditions do exist like this; if someone is beaten too badly, the muscles which support the internal organs will not function any more—the body starts to disintegrate. This is a truly painful and horrific condition.)

The story also preserves for us that Hadrian was about 28 at that time. He had been a handsome man, active and physically fit. Now consider him, unable to walk, his body falling apart, his face disfigured. He had been a soldier, one of the highest and closest to the emperor, a dependable and trustworthy man with a stable career before him, respected by the most powerful empire the world had ever seen. Now he was lying in a heap on the floor, a cripple who could not even feed himself.

Natalia got down on the ground, and put her hand under his head, whispering, "Blessed are you. You are my lord. My light. My sweet. God take you now, and deliver you from your sufferings."

Natalia was the only consolation Hadrian had in that hell. When the authorities realized that the wives of the prisoners were visiting, this was immediately forbidden. Natalia was totally devastated.

Picture her being roughly escorted out of the prison. Picture her thinking, "I will never see Hadrian again. What will happen to him? How will he stay strong to the end?" Picture her passing by and suddenly noticing a young slave boy. He is on his way to take food and water to the prisoners. She sees the slave boy's shaved head and baggy loose clothing.

Natalia got an idea. It began with a disguise. She dressed herself in baggy clothes and shaved her head. She began to visit the prison, passing herself off as one of the slave boy workers. Soon other wives were joining her, disguising themselves to care for the prisoners. We don't know how long Natalia did this dangerous thing, bringing food, water, healing and her deep love to Hadrian. You can imagine how each time Natalia had to pass through the checkpoints her heart must have been pounding.



The Church of S. Adriano al Foro in Rome, where the remains of St. Hadrian are finally said to have been buried.

Image from http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Curia_Julia_front.jpg

VOCATION LESSONS | 9th Grade: Marriage

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Some discussions starters:

1. Were there any words or concepts with which you weren't familiar? Let's go through those.
2. 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?
3. Have you ever gone through any experiences like these people (serving the family, being sick, death of loved ones, being afraid or in danger, standing up for your beliefs, doing work that didn't seem to fit you, tension with someone you love, etc.)? What did it feel like? How did you deal with it? Help them connect their experience to the story, e.g. "Ok, so you, the student, have felt real fear. It's a terrible thing. Imagine that fear: when Natalia thinks she won't be able to see her husband again."

INSTRUCTIONS:



MARRIAGE

READING *continued*

According to the story, this request was the last thing Natalia said to her husband: "When you go, pray for me, that I be safe from evil, and ask God to let you call me to come and join you as soon as possible."

Soon after, Natalia was discovered; she and some of the other women were hauled before the court and their husbands dragged out to be killed once and for all. The authorities were extremely angry at Natalia's disguise, so they did not choose a method of death that was quick and painless. The women's punishment was to watch their husbands die. They were not allowed to speak to their husbands.

Natalia watched as guards broke her husband's legs and then tossed him into a fire. She tried to follow Hadrian, but the guards held her back.

"When you go, pray for me, that I be safe from evil, and ask God to let you call me to come and join you as soon as possible."

Though she was still young, Natalia never remarried. She used to dream about Hadrian and beg him to call her home. A few years after Hadrian's death, a government official begged Natalia to marry him, but she refused. When he tried to force her to accept, she fled with some fellow Christians, taking her husband's remains to bury in a church at Constantinople.

On the voyage to Constantinople, a terrible storm came upon their ship. In a dream, Natalia saw Hadrian saving them and telling her it would not be long. They remained safe in the storm, and arrived in Constantinople. She buried Hadrian's remains properly, and soon after, Natalia had another dream. Hadrian was well and handsome again and told her it was time to join him in "eternal peace." She told friends about this dream, and the morning, they found that she had quietly passed away.

The Church reveres this heroic couple, and celebrates St. Hadrian and his Companions' feast on September 8.

ST. PHILIP HOWARD (1557 -1595)

This great story shows how the priesthood and marriage help each other.

Philip Howard was baptized Catholic, but his family later decided to join the Church of England. While Philip was still young, his mother died and his father remarried a widow who had a daughter named Anne. When Philip grew up, he married Anne. Although she was devoted to him, Philip cheated on her, at one point left her, and generally failed to practice any kind of religion.



Philip In The Tower

One day, Philip witnessed a brilliant debate between Fr. Edmund Campion, S.J. and some other scholars over issues of the Catholic Faith. Fr. Campion, a gifted scholar, had been imprisoned for his faith. He would eventually be executed by being hung, drawn, and quartered, simply for being a priest.

(Catholics were under a severe persecution from the protestant churches in England during this period. Catholicism was illegal. Refusing to attend Anglican services would result in huge fines. Many Catholics had their property taken unless they renounced the Faith; many were tortured and killed, especially priests, when they were discovered practicing the Faith.)

Over the next three years, Philip thought more and more about returning to the Catholic Faith. Finally he decided. His wife Anne converted just before he did. Converting sparked a new love between them. Philip and Anne fell deeply in love and conceived their first and only son. Philip, though, would never be able to see this child.

After their conversion, they were discovered to be practicing the Catholic Faith, and both were placed under house arrest. Anne lived more than a year under house arrest. When Philip was placed under house arrest, he attempted to flee, but was betrayed, caught, and imprisoned.

Cover the following points via lecture, or print out handouts and discuss with students.

1. The Meaning of Marriage / The Goal of the Vocation

A. Marriage: whom does it serve?

- i. Marriage exists “to build up the People of God” (CCC 1534). It signifies the union of Christ and His Church (CCC 1661).
- ii. Marriage is ordered to the good of the couple, that is, their sanctification, as well as to the generation and education of children (CCC 1660).

C. What is Marriage?

- i. The Church gives us the definition of marriage: “The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life and which is ordered by its nature to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring, has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament between the baptized” (Can. 1055 §1)
- ii. “The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator” (CCC 1603). The most natural of vocations, and the most common, is marriage. Marriage is based on the inborn complementarities—physical, emotional, and spiritual—of the two sexes, men and women. When a man and woman consent to marriage, this relationship mirrors the relationship of Christ to His Church and serves as a witness of this to the world. Between Christ and the Church there is complete difference, yet complete harmony. And this loving relationship renews the life of souls, the life of the world.
- iii. All loving relationships can “bear fruit,” metaphorically speaking. Marriage, however, is a loving relationship which can literally bring new life into the world.
- iv. Throughout the history of fallen man, he has abused sexual activity—with multiple partners, serial partners, with deliberate acts to avoid children, with partners of the same sex, or partners unable to give consent.^[6]
- v. Statistics, human experience, and the like show that sexual activity without boundaries destroys the dignity and love of the human being. The Church has always taught that the healthy boundary is marriage. Within marriage, sex flourishes as something that contributes to the soul, to humanity. Marriage is the one sexual rela-

tionship which witnesses to the world and which yields certain goods—namely, the good a man and woman can experience by finding harmony in their differences, and the good of new children in the world. Because they were made by God, even those who do not know God, can benefit from this relationship. Christ, in the fullness of time, has taught the true meaning of a relationship which has been natural to human beings from the beginning.

vi. Hence the Church has affirmed that marriage is:

- a. Between one man and one woman.
- b. A state-in-life (CCC 1663) “based on consent of the contracting parties, that is, on their will to give themselves, each to the other, mutually and definitively, in order to live a covenant of faithful and fruitful love” (CCC 1662).
- c. A relationship that implies indissolubility, fidelity, and openness to children (CCC 1664).

2. The Fruits of Marriage—the grace of the sacrament makes possible these wonderful fruits. While the circumstances of our own fallen nature and world can make it very difficult to achieve and experience these fruits, nevertheless, every marriage has a chance for the following:

- A. A permanent bond (CCC 1639), an intimate life of love and communion, the well-being of the individual, which helps the whole community (CCC 1603).
 - i. The spouses in a good marriage will provide mutual comfort, support, forgiveness, yielding of the will for the benefit of each other.
 - ii. They help each other in welcoming children. To have a child is an incredible gift, but it is also very hard to do alone. A spouse helps us share this responsibility.
 - iii. Since every child deserves a mother and a father, marriage also creates the proper circumstances for children to grow up in (CCC 2376).
- B. To be a sign of Christ’s love, a center of faith, hospitality, sacrifice (CCC 1654-1656), “islands of Christian life in an unbelieving world” (CCC 1655).
- C. To be a school “for human enrichment” (CCC 1657) where children and others witness, learn, and have help in practicing a prayer life, liturgical life, mutual service and forgiveness, the joy of work, self-denial, active charity.

[6] If needed, use Sophomore Unit to explore in more detail about the practical joys and challenges of marriage, or simply let students know that practical questions about contraception, natural family planning, divorce, remarriage, etc. get treated in the Sophomore Unit.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Reinforce the concepts given below. Optional stories and resources are provided to illustrate the points, generate discussion, or use as meditations / homework readings. Teachers are free to summarize some stories in their own words for brevity.

1. All of us are called to support marriage, every marriage, whether we are married or not.
 - A. A beautiful example of this comes from the story of Thomas More and John Fisher. (*See story*)
2. A life that serves marriage is a life that practices prayer and practices virtue. All the virtues are needed to support marriage. Two especially important virtues are Chastity and Hope in God's mercy.
 - A. *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."
 - i. Many prayers, including prayers at mass, refer to heaven being full of holy virgins. Priests, religious, single people, 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 God helps them find a good spouse to whom they can give this gift.



MARRIAGE

READING *continued*

Philip Howard lived under threat of death for the next ten years in the Tower of London. He was forbidden to see his wife or their child, whom she bore shortly after his imprisonment, unless he agreed to attend an Anglican service. Anne absolutely supported Philip in his refusal. Philip eventually contracted a disease and died alone.

On the wall of the prison, it is said he scratched these words in Latin: "Quanto plus afflictiones pro Christo in hoc saeculo, tanto plus gloriae cum Christo in futuro," which, translated into English, means "The more affliction we endure for Christ in this world, the more glory we shall obtain with Christ in the next."

Philip Howard was canonized by Pope Paul VI in 1970. [5] His wife Anne would go on to found a Jesuit House and support many priests in their clandestine work for God in England.

CLOSING

SAINTS THOMAS MORE AND JOHN FISHER

Thomas More (1478-1535) was a husband, father, scholar, translator, lawyer, and served as the King's Chancellor for several years—the second highest position in government. John Fisher (1469-1535) was Bishop of Rochester, also a scholar, a great preacher and author. Both had strong prayer lives. Both did penance quietly—rising early in the morning, or doing without extreme luxuries, although both could easily have used their positions to live in luxury.



In the 1530s, King Henry VIII decided he no longer wanted to be married to his wife Catherine of Aragon because she was unable to have a boy that could take his place as king. He wanted to take a new wife, a woman named Anne Boleyn. In fact, he had already been committing adultery with her. He was hoping that the Catholic Church would grant him an annulment. But the Church ruled that Henry was truly married to Catherine, and therefore, could not take a second wife. So King Henry founded his own church, divorced Catherine, married Anne Boleyn, and demanded that everyone recognize his new marriage. Over the next few years, Bishop John Fisher and Thomas More firmly opposed the king.

These two men faced danger, poverty, imprisonment, and eventually death. And both were defending a different vocation than his own. Hilaire Belloc tells us that Thomas More died to defend the authority of the Pope, a celibate man, to judge in spiritual matters: "he did not die for the real presence, as did many another after him. He did not die, as many another might have done, out of loyalty to Queen Catherine. He did not die as a protest against a doctrine generally held heretical... He did not die for the mass or for the sanctity of the clerical order. He died only for that one point of the papal supremacy." [8] Of course, he might have willingly died for any of those things, had they been in question; but the issue at stake was the authority of the Pope over the Church, and More died in defense of this.

[5] See New Advent at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07503a.htm>

[8] Hilaire Belloc, "Saint Thomas More," *Characters of the Reformation* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books & Publishers, 1992), 63.

- ii. A beautiful example of a virgin martyr is St. Maria Goretti. (*See story*)
- B. *Hope in God's mercy* and returning to purity. All of us have sinned; Christ came for the sinner. If you have lost your virginity, there is still certainly hope for you. St. Mary Magdalen, St. Augustine, and Bl. Charles de Foucauld [7] 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.
 - i. For more help on putting purity into practice, there are a lot of resources available at www.chastity.com

[7] See Sophomore unit for story of Charles de Foucauld.

HOMEWORK

Choose and assign one of the following options.

1. Read about or research another married saint not covered during the class. (Some examples of married saints are Joseph and Mary, Elizabeth Ann Seton, Elizabeth of Hungary) Write a reflection, answering these questions about the saint/story:
 - A. 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?
 - B. Have you ever gone through any experiences like these people (serving the family, being sick, mourning deaths of loved ones, being afraid or in danger, standing up for your beliefs, doing work that didn't seem to fit you, having tension with someone you love, etc.)? What did it feel like? How did you deal with it?
2. Based on the information from this lesson, have students answer these questions:
 - A. What is the basic Church teaching about marriage? Give three main points.
 - B. How is marriage beneficial for a couple?
 - C. How is marriage beneficial for the people around them?
 - D. What do you think? Who is more benefited by marriage—the married couple or the people around them? Give reasons for your judgment.



MARRIAGE

CLOSING

On the other hand, Bishop John Fisher, a celibate priest, made his martyrdom in defense of the vocation of marriage. He was Catherine of Aragon's confessor; she feared for his life and told him he did not need to take such a risk for her. But Fisher had already said in public that he was greatly inspired by the example of St. John the Baptist. That forerunner of Christ, said Fisher, had died in the cause of marriage. Even further, that hero had been willing to die for marriage before the time when Christ made marriage holy by the shedding of his blood.^[9] Bishop John Fisher decided he could do no less than his patron saint.

Thomas More and Bishop John Fisher were both beheaded in 1535. They witnessed to the fact that we are called, whatever our vocation, to serve and defend other vocations.

MARIA GORETTI (1890-1902)^[10]

Maria Goretti was born to an Italian farming family. When her mother was widowed, the family moved to share life and work with another family called the Serenellis. This family had a son named Alessandro, older than Maria by seven years.

When Maria was younger she was remembered for being responsible in her chores, always ready to share or even give away her treats to her siblings, and for being so overjoyed at her First Communion, that the priest allowed her to receive more frequently than was usually allowed in that era.



One day, when Maria was twelve, while she was babysitting, Alessandro attacked her. He tried to rape her. She resisted his attack, screaming that God would never want him to do such a terrible thing. Alessandro was unable to overpower her; he ended by stabbing her 11 times with a nine-and-a-half inch knife and leaving her for dead.

The story is truly terrible. Maria was dragging herself to the door to call for help. Alessandro heard her, returned and stabbed her three more times to finish her off. Maria's screams this time finally attracted the attention of the family off working in the fields.

It took Maria twenty-four hours to die and she couldn't have a drink of water because her internal injuries were so bad. As a minor, Alessandro was sentenced to 30 years in prison. For the first eight years in prison he wasn't sorry at all. But then he had a dream of Maria, who came to him with lilies in her arms. She told him, "Alessandro, as I have promised, your soul shall someday reach me in heaven."

Alessandro became a model prisoner. He was released three years early, shortly before 1929. In 1937 Alessandro went to beg forgiveness from Maria's mother. They went to Mass together that night; it was Christmas. Alessandro was asked to give testimony when Maria's cause for canonization was begun. In the time that had passed more than forty miracles had been credited to her intercession. Both Maria's mother and Alessandro were there for Maria's canonization in 1950.

A wonderful documentary about this saint by the Mercy Foundation can be viewed online. Her whole story is beautiful, but you can view the passion and death of the saint by starting at Part III: <http://youtu.be/5Vj0Mb6Ga38?t=3m> and then viewing Part IV, or play all at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z5HJ5IYci8&list=PL11C6E0CCED11C1E>

[9] Stanley L. Jaki, "Introduction," in John Fisher, *The Defense of the Priesthood* (Port Huron, MI: American Council on Economics and Society, 1996), 18-19.

[10] A great version of the story of Maria Goretti is available with photographs in Ann Ball's *Modern Saints* (Tan Books, 2009).