



# FAMILYWORKS

*Newsletter of the Australian Catholic Marriage & Family Council  
Number 2/2011*

## **National Marriage Day – 13 August 2011**

National Marriage Day is celebrated on 13 August each year to commemorate the passing of the Australian Federal Government's Marriage Amendment Bill 2004 which defined marriage as "the union of a man and a woman, to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life". It provides an opportunity for all those who believe in the importance of marriage to unite in a show of strength.

More importantly, it is an opportunity for every married couple to renew commitment to one another, an opportunity to do a special act of love for your lover.



### **National Marriage Day Rally – Canberra – 16 August 2011**

The National Marriage Coalition has booked the Great Hall of Parliament House Canberra for Tuesday 16th August 2011, 10am to 12pm. The aim of the rally is to send a message to Parliament: "Don't meddle with marriage!"

Guest Speaker: Rebecca Hegelin (Author of best seller: "30 Ways in 30 Days to Save Your Family") - Topic: "One Man, One Woman: The Future of Civil Society".

**National Marriage Day Rally:** <http://www.marriageday.org.au/>

**National Marriage Coalition:** <http://www.marriage.org.au/>

### **NEWSFLASH!**

*On 17th August Federal MP's will be asked to report to Parliament the views of their electorate on same-sex "marriage". It is now more urgent than ever to gather your friends, neighbours, church group and colleagues and come to Canberra on August 16th. Marriage is too important for you to sit by and leave it to someone else to defend. At times like these it is crowds that talk!*

## **Set Your Sights on 'Milan 2012'**

### **World Meeting of Families with Pope Benedict Milan, 30 May to 3 June 2012**



In announcing the 7<sup>th</sup> World Meeting of Families, Pope Benedict XVI urged: "Christian families and church communities around the world ... to set their sights on "Milan 2012".

The two days of celebrations, music, testimonies and papal mass will be preceded by a Pastoral Theological Congress on this year's theme: "Family, Work and Celebration." The theme highlights how to lead a life of balance between one's work and family.

The Australian Catholic Marriage & Family Council, together with Harvest Pilgrimages is preparing details of a pilgrimage to Italy which has the World Meeting as its focus.

**Expressions of interest in the pilgrimage can be sent to:** [familyworks@catholic.org.au](mailto:familyworks@catholic.org.au).

**World Meeting details on YouTube:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9qPbAYctAWA>

## Sydney to Host the 2013 World Congress of Families



## World Congress of Families

More than 3,000 participants from more than 100 countries are expected to gather in Sydney for the Congress. The World Congress of Families comprises people from many national, ethnic, cultural, social and religious communities who affirm that the family is the fundamental social unit, inscribed in human nature, and centred around the voluntary union of a man and a woman in a lifelong covenant of marriage, for the purposes of:

- satisfying the longings of the human heart to give and receive love;
- welcoming and ensuring the full physical and emotional development of children;
- sharing a home that serves as the centre for social, educational, economic, and spiritual life;
- building strong bonds among the generations to pass on a way of life that has transcendent meaning;
- extending a hand of compassion to individuals and households whose circumstances fall short of these ideals.

*Dates: 15 – 18 May, 2013.*

**World Congress of Families:** <http://www.profam.org/press/wcf.pr.110519.htm>

### ***“Best practice” guide on evangelisation through the family – a request to readers***

The Australian Catholic Marriage & Family Council is continuing to develop a database of suggestions for calling on the evangelising potential of families at parish level. Please let us know of your experience. The possibilities are endless, e.g. hospitality initiatives, reaching out to alienated families, recognising special needs, renewal of marriage vows, family bushwalks, mentoring young couples, etc.

**Why not jot your ideas down right now and email to:** [familyworks@catholic.org.au](mailto:familyworks@catholic.org.au)

### ***The Parish & Marriage Resource Centre***



Parish & Marriage Resource Centre

*The PMRC website is a veritable goldmine of Catholic resources for children, teenagers, engaged or married couples and families. It is an ideal starting point for teachers, marriage educators, and parish family ministries.*

**Web address:** <http://www.thepmrc.org/>

### ***A Movement of Continuous Prayer for Marriage and Family Life***

This is a simple way to promote prayer for marriage and family life. Members of a family, parish, group or indeed any organisation are invited to join a ‘chain’ of people who will pray for one hour at a time once a month. Normally a group will nominate one particular day and members of the chain can pray wherever they find themselves at their rostered hour. The format is completely flexible but most use a booklet entitled ‘Ask Search Knock’ which has a very inclusive style. The booklet costs \$3.00 and copies can be obtained from the PMRC, 27 Cuzco Street, South Coogee NSW 2034 (Tel 02 9349 1710).

*Most people involved in this Movement of prayer comment that they find being part of a chain helps them to set aside extra time for prayer than would otherwise be the case. They are also delighted by the way in which the booklet tends to remind them of the many friends and contacts for whose families they might wish to pray.*

## **'For Your Marriage' - US Bishops' Website on Marriage**



'For Your Marriage' is a comprehensive resource on all aspects of sexuality, marriage, parenting and family life from a Catholic perspective.

**For Your Marriage website:** <http://foryourmarriage.org>

## **Questions & Answers on Marriage & Same-Sex Unions**

The Life, Marriage and Family Office of the Archdiocese of Melbourne has published a question and answer pamphlet addressing challenging questions on 'Marriage and Same-Sex Unions'. The pamphlet affirms the Church's age long teaching (and, indeed, the understanding of societies around the world for millennia) that 'marriage' is a *union of a man and a woman, to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life. At its core, marriage respects and affirms the distinct yet complementary difference between a man and a woman and its natural link to bearing children.*

"We agree that every human being must be respected and treated with dignity, however, for the good of our community and especially for the future of our young people, we should continue to protect the unique institution of marriage as traditionally understood and actually lived as the complementary love between a man and a woman."

*The pamphlet notes the recent decision by the Federal Parliament asking MPs to seek the views of constituents regarding Parliament redefining marriage to include 'same-sex' unions. Now that the 'Greens' have achieved the 'balance of power' in the Senate, a private member's bill is likely in the near future to change the federal Marriage Act to redefine marriage in this way. People are urged to contact their local MPs and express their views on this matter.*

## **Pope Benedict XVI - on the Heritage of John Paul II on Marriage and Family**

*This year is the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the John-Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family. To celebrate the anniversary, a Congress was held on the theme: "The heritage of John Paul II on marriage and the family: to love human love."*

*Addressing the Congress, Pope Benedict highlighted two major ideas which mark "the novelty of John Paul II's teaching on human love." The first is that "marriage and the family are rooted in the most intimate core of truth about man and his destiny." The second element is "that Christ, fullness of the Father's revelation of love, also reveals the full truth of man's vocation of love, which can only be completely achieved in the sincere giving of self."*

*Pope Benedict recalled his own Encyclical "Deus caritas est", which suggests that "the close relationship between the image of God Love and human love enables us to understand that 'corresponding to the image of a monotheistic God is monogamous marriage."*

*"Marriage", he said, "based on exclusive and definitive love becomes the icon of the relationship between God and His people and vice versa. God's way of loving becomes the measure of human love'."*

*He explained that "This idea has still largely to be explored," adding that the institute's task is "to illuminate the truth of love as a road to completeness in all forms of human existence."*

*"Authentic love", he said, "becomes a light guiding all life to its fulfilment, creating a society in which mankind can live. The communion of life and love that is marriage is thus ... a real good for society."*

*The Holy Father concluded his address saying that "Avoiding confusion with other kinds of union based on a weak form of love is, today, particularly urgent. Only the rock of complete and irrevocable love between man and woman is capable of acting as a foundation for a society that can be home to all human beings."*

**For more information on the Australian Campus of the John-Paul II Institute:** <http://www.jp2institute.org/>

# Stages of Marriage

(Adapted from: "For Your Marriage" website of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops. <http://foryourmarriage.org/> )

*“All healthy marriages experience change and transition. That’s what keeps them alive and growing.”*

The psychologist Paul Tournier said, “I’ve been married six times – all to the same woman.” Tournier explained that he never got divorced, but rather his marriage transitioned from one stage to another.

All healthy marriages experience change and transition. That’s what keeps them alive and growing. Some of the stages of growth are predictable, others are not.

We provide an Overview of the Stages of Marriage. Then, for simplicity, we’ve divided marriage into the chronological time frames of:

- *Newly Married (0 – 5 years)*
- *Middle Years (6 – 25 years)*, which usually coincides with active parenting stage
- *Later Years (26+ years)*, also known as the “empty nest” years

Not all marriages fit neatly into these categories and the time frames will vary with each couple; however, certain developmental tasks generally take place during each stage.

## **Stage 1 – The First Five Years**

The first five years can be exhilarating as couples experience new “firsts” together- their first Christmas as a married couple, first dinner party for the in-laws, even their first joint tax return. At the same time, the early years require some radical personal adjustment, which is stressful on the relationship. The latest Australian statistics suggest that roughly one third of all marriages fail in the first five years. Why?

Sometimes it’s poor choice of partner. Couples who entered enthusiastically- but blindly- into marriage soon see their spouse’s shadow side when there’s no longer a need to keep up a good front. They realize that they married a person who doesn’t share the remote, likes to chatter in the morning or, worse yet, doesn’t share their values. They assume that marriage won’t change that and they divorce quickly.

Others fall prey to the stresses of early marriage. Some of these stresses might be age-related. Young couples may not have developed the emotional maturity, coping and communication skills, or financial savvy to navigate the many decisions thrust upon them early in their marriage. Hanging in and learning the art of negotiating can resolve many of these issues, but it takes maturity and patience.

Help is available if the couple has the wisdom and humility to seek it. The most important thing to remember is that most of the early stressful adjustments in marriage are normal. What are the important issues that need to be negotiated?

According to research done by the Center for Marriage and Family at Creighton University the top three issues for couples during the first five years of marriage are time, sex, and money:

### **A. Time**

You would think that combining households would simplify life and save time. But newly married couples have to keep up with their spouse’s schedule in addition to their own. Add in jobs, education, time for new in-laws and private time together, and it may seem like you’re a hamster running around the wheel of life. Then, when the first child arrives, you realize that life will never be the same.

Most newlyweds struggle to balance family and work. Since work pays the bills, it’s tempting to consider it the top priority. An all-consuming job, however, like a mistress, can steal attention from your spouse. You may need to agree on how many extra hours you can reasonably work. Carving out quality time for the two of you can require sacrifice, such as cutting back on personal hobbies or workouts at the gym. At some point you may need to summon the courage to look for a different job ... or work out together.

## B. Sex

Sex should be the easy and fun part. After all, you're married! Why would this cause stress? Despite the conventional wisdom that your sexual relationship should be comfortable and exciting, especially during the early years of marriage, many couples reported problems around the frequency and quality of sexual relations. Developing a gratifying sexual relationship depends on having the time and energy to tend to it. Reread "Time" above.

## C. Money

Most newlyweds are at the beginning of their earning curve. They are also learning to understand and blend their individual attitudes toward money. All of this can be stressful. In addition, many couples bring debt into the marriage, and some couples accumulate too much debt.

Another issue is: "Who has the power?" Many couples consider themselves egalitarian- "We'll share everything." Then she finds herself uncomfortable with the loose way he spends "their" hard earned money and he's annoyed by the way she hoards it.

Other issues include parenting, religious differences, and conflict resolution. Sometimes, the very issues that should bring a couple together, a child, faith, and communication, also cause strain. Because couples care so strongly about these things they are both potential dividers and bonders.

The arrival of a child brings joy- and stress. Parents can feel overwhelmed with the responsibility of caring for a child, in addition to the loss of privacy and freedom. Parenting is hard work and when spouses are tired, they get irritable, just like kids.

Shared faith can bind the spouses together. It also requires that a couple talk about their different approaches to spirituality and God. Some people would rather ignore this part of life out of fear, guilt, or bad experiences. Good communication skills, compromise, unselfishness, and an open mind can help you work through the above issues.

So what can you do when you experience these normal stresses of life in the newlywed lane?

Gather with other newlyweds. You'll find you're not alone.

Keep dating. Prioritize quality time together.

Confide in other couples who have recently walked this road. They can help you sort out what's normal and what is not. They can console you because they've been there and comfort you with stories of how it could be worse. Many Catholic parishes offer trained mentor couples for their engaged and newly married couples. Check it out.

Take advantage of marriage education and enrichment opportunities (books, videos, programs).

Seek professional help if an issue begins to separate you.

## Resources:

[\*FOUNDATIONS\*](#), a bi-monthly newsletter for newly married couples

[\*First Years and Forever\*](#), a monthly e-newsletter

[\*Smart Marriages\*](#): lists excellent resources

[\*Time, Sex, and Money: The First Five Years of Marriage\*](#) : Center for Marriage and Family, Creighton University

[\*"In Sickness and in Health"\*](#) : Newly Married Stories on [ForYourMarriage.org](http://ForYourMarriage.org)

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*(In the next issue of FamilyWorks we will look at the "Marriage – the Middle Years".)*

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