



## **What is a family?**

In the beginning, God created Adam and Eve, male and female. He blessed them with love as family and they had children. However, the first family made mistakes and fell as all of us do; therefore, God continues to renew all of us through the direction and guidance of the Church.

Bishop of Mymensingh: *the family, the foundation "of society and Church"*

<http://www.news.va/en/news/bishop-of-mymensingh-the-family-the-foundation-of>

Last year, Pope Francis assembled the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops precisely to focus on the challenges facing the institution of marriage and family in the light of the new evangelization.

<http://www.foryourmarriage.org/pope-invites-families-to-pray-for-upcoming-extraordinary-synod/>

Arrival ceremony in Sri Lanka, address of his Holiness Pope Francis:

We are called to live in harmony like a family in amongst one another.

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/january/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150113\\_srilanka-filippine-benvenuto.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/january/documents/papa-francesco_20150113_srilanka-filippine-benvenuto.html)

The Pope continues this theme when he visits the US for the upcoming world meeting in Philadelphia

<http://www.worldmeeting2015.org>

## **Present day Challenges:**

Weddings in the US can be difficult because many are immigrants, particularly here in Los Angeles. It is hard for people to obtain all the required papers, such as Baptismal certificate, First Communion, Confirmation... Also, how they are looking at the Sacrament itself is significant that not many young Catholics nowadays fully understand the sacrament of Marriage, simply because they have no understanding of vocation, or the grace of the Sacrament itself.

In the National Pastoral Initiative for Marriage (NPIM) the U.S. Catholic bishops call attention to the meaning and value of married life for the Church and for society.

Bringing Catholic belief into dialogue with contemporary needs, the bishops urge the Catholic Church to become a community of hope and help for marriages and to join others in building a culture of marriage.

The Initiative weaves together the Catholic faith tradition and its pastoral practice, the data of social science, and the experience of married couples to offer guidance and resources, including a pastoral letter, in order to promote, strengthen, sustain and restore marriages.

### **In the Catholic community:**

There is a need to demonstrate pastoral concern for strengthening marriage at all its stages and in its many circumstances, particularly through listening to the experience of the Christian faithful;

- Priests should introduce the people (living in LA) to the pastoral care for couples that are living together. (For example: counseling, marriage classes, Marriage Encounter and so forth)
- We may see other suggestions in the *Familiaris Consortio* document of the Church.  
[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_19811122\\_familiaris-consortio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio_en.html)

There is a need to offer authoritative teaching and pastoral guidance about marriage as a sacrament, a vocation, and a human institution;

- Priests need formation, and the people of God also need formation. We need to form our people through teaching and classes, in order for them to understand and be formative toward others.
- The Church is the Body of Christ and She always teaches the Truth and we need to communicate with people of God about the Truth. If we live in the Truth, then the Truth should speak for itself.

There is a need to connect authentic Catholic belief and teaching with the major issues present in marriage today;

- “The family that prays together, stays together.” Fr. Patrick Peyton, CSC
- Encourage families to establish and maintain their connection with the Church's teachings by introducing them to the annual retreats, as well other formations that are available.

There is a need to promote more extensive and effective ministries to marriage, particularly in parishes.

- Priests must listen and understand the issues of families and pastorally address them regarding what the Church is inviting them to live out.
- At parish level, there are many different ministries that are effective and encouraging to marriage; from formation of the children in the ORE, Confirmation, Young Adult, Marriage Encounter and other ministries; they all have wonderful and effective contributions to the people in the parish. However, we need to emphasize the point and direct them to the direction that serves the needs and formation in the parish.

### **In Society:**

There is a need to offer a specific Catholic witness to the meaning, value, and sanctity of marriage;

- Invite a few “good” families in the parish to get involved in the formation of engaged couples and ask them to give a witness talk to the parish at Masses; particularly, regarding to the meaning, value and sanctity of their marriage.

There is a need to join our efforts with those of others who are working in various social sectors to promote, preserve, and protect marriage;

- Here in California, we have various public and private sectors offering counseling and assistance

to families that are struggling with issues. They aim to provide information and education to support the families that are at risk.

- University Consortium for Children and Families UCCF:  
<http://luskin.ucla.edu/content/university-consortium-children-and-families-uccf>
- University-based Child and Family Policy Consortium:  
<http://childpolicyuniversityconsortium.com/>

There is a need to encourage laws, public policies, and other social strategies that will strengthen marriage in light of its contribution to the common good and its benefit to individuals, families, and communities

- Recently, California has passed the “Same-Sex-Marriage” bill, which makes it hard for the Church to continue to promote the common good of God's people.
- The Bill is passed, but it doesn't mean that we should or must follow the policies of the State. We definitely have to work harder and more efficiently against “Same-Sex-Marriage.” In order for us to promote the sacrament of marriage in the way God has commanded.
- People need to fully understand the sanctity of the Sacrament of Marriage and what it is asked and offered to us.

#### **Other suggestions:**

#### **Preaching Preparation:**

- Since it is suggested that priests have a 3 minutes homily on weekdays and 7 minutes on the weekend; we would suggest that priests to spend at least 1 -2 minutes on the weekend to talk about how God's word touches, invites and challenges the parishioners in their family; especially their marriage.

#### **Bulletins:**

- Parishes need to communicate with parishioners about the updates with regards retreats and others services regard to marriage and family.
- We can suggest certain programs and ideas that can strengthen family values in our parish bulletin; such as, movies, television programs, books and other media.

#### **People need the following:**

- They need to be informed about the challenges to the public regarding the Sacrament of Marriage
- Be formed in order for them to face the challenges
- Communicate with their priests for enrichment and counseling
- Joyfully celebrate their marriage with the community
- Spread joy within their family and parish.

#### **Additional Resources:**

- *New trends underscore need to strengthen family stability:*  
<http://www.cacatholic.org/index.php/issues2/family-life/marriage-public-policy/951-retreat-from-marriage-reaches-working-middle-class>