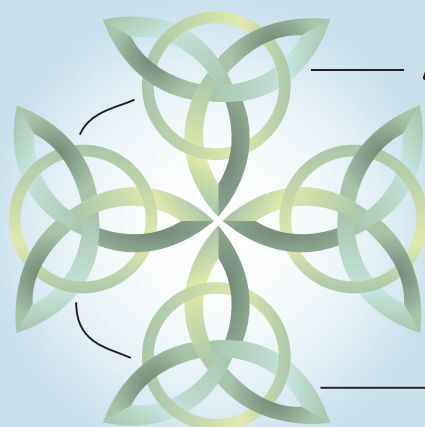


# MENTOR COUPLE'S GUIDE



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## *Together* IN GOD'S *Love*

A Catholic Preparation for Marriage

# INTRODUCTION

*Thank you* for being a mentor couple to your fellow Catholics who are embarking on the holy sacrament of marriage. In many ways, marriage — perhaps one of the most necessarily communal institutions — can often feel like a solitary one. By offering your time and insight as a mentor couple, you show that you understand that every marriage needs the support of our faith as well as the real-world experience we can only give to one another. This is truly a gift you're giving, and it is sincerely appreciated.

The marriage program your church has selected is called *Together in God's Love — A Catholic Preparation for Marriage*. It delves deeply into the theology and practice of four, major areas of Catholic marriage:

- ✠ Faith
- ✠ Communication
- ✠ Sexuality
- ✠ Stewardship

Throughout the curriculum, the Trinity — the central mystery of our faith — serves as the basis of the Church's teaching about marriage. Our coming together with one another in marriage is as a visible sign of the communion of the Trinity. Jesus' relationship with the Church serves as a second basis of this teaching. Therefore, this program is based on *two* truths — the communion of the Trinity and the relationship of self-gift between Jesus and the Church.

This booklet will give you starting points and can help provide some structure to your conversations with the couples who are about to be married. It summarizes the curriculum's major points and gives mentor couples a more immediate way to reinforce the importance of the four core components of a marriage.



*Nihil Obstat:*

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# MARRIAGE & Faith

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this section of *Together in God's Love* is to present a basic Catholic theology of marriage based on the *communion* of the Blessed Trinity and the *self-gift* between Christ and the Church.

## REFERENCES

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Nos. 1210-1211, 1601-1666; *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, Ch. 21

## SUMMARY

As you already know, marriage is a sacrament. In their larger groups, couples have discussed how — in Catholic tradition — sacraments are defined as “visible signs of an invisible reality.” This means that (just like the water in baptism or the oil used in the anointing of the sick) the marriage rite is a tangible sign of the intangible reality taking place in the Sacrament of Matrimony. The married couple is the essential, visible sign of God’s binding two individuals as one.

The couples have likely discussed the

importance of this sacrament and its connection to the mystery of the Trinity and the self-gift of Jesus to his Church. If these

two people have been called to come together as one, it’s important that both of them consider the other ways in which they are called to emulate the communion of the Trinity and the loving self-gift between Christ and the Church. This type of reflection should end in a reminder that Jesus always welcomes us back, no matter the reasons for nor the length of our distance from him.





# SELF-ASSESSMENT

In their larger groups, the couples you are mentoring may have completed a Self-Assessment included in their workbook. The Self-Assessment is included below. As a mentor couple, take this Self-Assessment before meeting with those who are to be married. Discuss how your answers and your experience might be helpful and relevant to them (and theirs to you).

**What was your first image of God? How has that image changed?**

**What were some of your early experiences of God and faith?**

**What does your faith mean to you right now?**

**What role did God play in your parents' marriage or in the family in which you grew up?**

**What role would you like to see God and faith play in your marriage?**

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## MENTOR COUPLE'S UNIQUE EXPERIENCE

The experience of your faith and its importance to your marriage can be useful to couples who are still finding out about one another. While it's important to note that your marriage is only one example among countless others, please share some examples of how your faith strengthened your marriage and your marriage strengthened your faith. The prompts below are meant only to be thought starters for you as mentor couples. Use them if you wish, or create your own examples:

**Are you both Catholic? Were you both Catholic before you were married? How has your common faith experience shaped your marriage?**

**How have you balanced your faith in your relationship and the secular society in which we live?**

**What has been your key to staying together? When difficult times occur, as they do in every marriage, has there been a time when you turned to the Church for help?**

**Is there an example of when you have really felt like the Sacrament of Matrimony made you one?**

# MARRIAGE *Communication*

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this section of *Together in God's Love* is to:

**Illustrate how** our families of origin have had an impact on our communication styles.

**Present effective ways** to communicate with one another, especially in conflict situations.

**Provide a framework** for reconciliation when hurts occur in the relationship.

## REFERENCES

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Nos. 2335, 2360-2363, 2364, 2370, 2380-2381, 2387-2391; *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, Ch. 21, pp. 283-285; Ch. 30

## SUMMARY

Communication is difficult at times, even in the longest and seemingly “strongest” marriages. It is also one of the most important attributes of a successful marriage. As married adults, we tend to imitate the family systems in which we grew up. Our “families of origin” are where we learned most of what we know about relating to others. Couples have discussed how their families of origin have shaped them and their attitudes, values, and styles of communication. They have also begun discussions about how they want their family to be similar to, and different than, their families of origin.

The Three Persons of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) have a common purpose and an intimate union. So intimate, in fact, that they are Three Persons but one God. As human beings (and spouses) who celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony, to the best of our ability, we try to emulate this unity.

In marriage, we must name what we want, be open to what our spouses are trying to communicate to us and spend time together to strengthen our relationship. It is primarily through the gift of “Self-Giving” — or putting the best interests of a marriage and, ultimately, a family, ahead of our own interests — that we can emulate Jesus’ example of self-giving and self sacrifice.

The section also discusses “Self-Centered” vs. “Self-Giving” statements and listening habits couples can practice to work through disagreements. The Self-Giving side of this chart is designed to foster constructive communication habits.

Finally, this section talks couples through the important step of reconciliation when they are faced with the inevitable hurts they will cause one another throughout their marriage. Forgiveness is both an act and a process. Restoring trust takes time.





# SELF-ASSESSMENT

In their larger groups, the couples you are mentoring may have completed a Self-Assessment included in their workbook. The Self-Assessment is included below. As a mentor couple, take this Self-Assessment before meeting with those who are to be married. Discuss how your answers and your experience might be helpful and relevant to them (and theirs to you).

**When you were growing up, what was communication like in your family? Did your family talk a lot? A little? Was there yelling? Did your family listen to one another? How similar (or different) is your own style of communication now?**

**When you are communicating something important, how do you like to be heard? What tells you that you are being listened to? How do you show others that you are tuned in to what they are saying?**

**When someone is sharing feedback that is hard for you to hear, how do you like them to say it? How do you react? Do you often think, 'I wish they had said/done that differently?'**

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## MENTOR COUPLE'S UNIQUE EXPERIENCE

The experience of your marriage can be useful to couples who are still finding out about one another. While it's important to note that your marriage is only one example among countless others, please share some examples of how you communicate in your own marriage. The prompts below are meant only to be thought starters for you as mentor couples. Use them if you wish, or create your own examples:

**Does your family of origin continue to affect your marriage and how you communicate?**

**What was your biggest fight about? How did you resolve it? How often do you fight?**

**How do your communication styles differ from your spouse's? How are they the same?**

**When was the last time you had to forgive one another? Did it take a long time, or was it pretty easy to do?**

# MARRIAGE & Sexuality

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this section of *Together in God's Love* is to present marital sexuality within the context of the mutual gift of self.

## REFERENCES

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Nos. 2335, 2360-2363, 2364, 2370, 2380-2381, 2387-2391; *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, Ch. 21, pp. 283-285; Ch. 30

## SUMMARY

Catholic teaching on sex and sexuality has gotten a bad rap in our society. Catholicism is often misconstrued as being prudish. Or, worse still, Catholics know that the church is against premarital sex and birth control, but don't understand why. This section clears up many myths and misunderstandings and provides a very clear outline about what the Church believes and teaches.

The Catholic Church isn't anti-sex. In fact, the only way a Catholic mar-

riage can be considered fully valid is if it's consummated sexually. Sex within the Sacrament of Matrimony is as close as we human beings can get to emulating the Three-in-One concept of the Holy Trinity and the complete self-gift of Christ to the Church, his bride.

As Catholics, we understand sex as the giving of ourselves, body and soul, to one another without reservation. Premarital sex (or sex with "no strings attached") is full of reservations; the commitments inherent to marriage don't exist there. Catholic teaching also maintains that every time we have sex, we're open to the possibility of conceiving a child. We can see why the Church opposes artificial contraception — it isn't "without reservation." Natural family planning is taught because, even if we are only having sex at times when physical signs say the woman is infertile, the possibility of conception still exists.

Couples will have discussed the Church's teachings on premarital sex, living together before marriage, contraception, masturbation and pornography. In each of these cases sex — taken out of the context in which is meant — is what the Church teaches against. In its proper context, sex is not only OK, it's encouraged and even sacred. Sexual love should be something freely given and received, without fear, without shame, and without reservations.



# SELF-ASSESSMENT

In their larger groups, the couples you are mentoring may have completed a Self-Assessment included in their workbook. The Self-Assessment is included below. As a mentor couple, take this Self-Assessment before meeting with those who are to be married. Discuss how your answers and your experience might be helpful and relevant to them (and theirs to you).

**What are some of the messages and experiences that have led to your understanding of sexuality?**

**What are some issues that still might need to be resolved — for example, negative messages to which you were exposed, or experiences you had in childhood and adolescence?**

**What do you know about Catholic Church teaching about sexuality and the reasoning behind it?**

**What do you want your sexual relationship with your spouse to be like? What should sex mean to you as a couple?**



## MENTOR COUPLE'S UNIQUE EXPERIENCE

The experience of your marriage can be useful to couples who are still finding out about one another. While it's important to note that your marriage is only one example among countless others, please share some examples of how the Church's teaching on sexuality affects your own marriage. The prompts below are meant only to be thought starters for you as mentor couples. Use them if you wish, or create your own examples:

**In a highly sexualized society, what advice might you give to a couple that is soon to be married?**

**What are some ways couples might continue their journey toward marriage in a way that is in keeping with the Church's teaching?**

**When you were first married, what did your vision for your family look like? How has it changed? How has it stayed the same?**

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# MARRIAGE & Stewardship

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this section of *Together in God's Love* is to appreciate one's time, talent, and treasure as gifts from God, and to encourage couples to reflect on the ways in which their individual gifts can complement each other and benefit the family and the larger community.

## REFERENCES

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Nos. 2402, 2221-2231, 2379, 1654;  
*United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, Ch. 34, pp. 450

## SUMMARY

As you are doing by your willingness to serve as mentors, all married couples have a responsibility to use their gifts of time, talent and treasure for good. We are all called to be visible signs to others of God's greatness and generosity.

"Stewardship" refers to the gifts we have been given and the ways in which we share them with others. One of God's greatest gifts — and the greatest blessing for which married couples are called to be stewards — is a child. Part of the stewardship of marriage is raising children in our

faith and to teach them to live like Jesus taught us.

But stewardship does not stop at home. Married couples are called to be generous so that we can imitate the God of Abundance and cooperate with God in providing for his people. In order to make sure our families have what they need *and* that we still have something to give back to our communities, the Church teaches us to make responsible decisions with the gifts we have (money, resources, time and abilities). We are taught that to serve God, we must serve others.



# SELF-ASSESSMENT

In their larger groups, the couples you are mentoring may have completed a Self-Assessment included in their workbook. The Self-Assessment is included below. As a mentor couple, take this Self-Assessment before meeting with those who are to be married. Discuss how your answers and your experience might be helpful and relevant to them (and theirs to you).

**What are some of the gifts you have been given? What are some of the gifts you will bring together as a married couple?**

**In what ways do you share those gifts with God and with others?**

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## MENTOR COUPLE'S UNIQUE EXPERIENCE

The experience of your marriage can be useful to couples who are still finding out about one another. While it's important to note that your marriage is only one example among countless others, please share some examples of how you try to live the example of God's generosity in your own marriage. The prompts below are meant only to be thought starters for you as mentor couples. Use them if you wish, or create your own examples:

**Have you been through a job loss, bankruptcy, foreclosure or had debt you didn't know how to manage? How did you get through it? How was your marriage different after the crisis than it was before?**

**How do you share your talents with the Church? With your broader community? What are the things you do for free that bring greater value to those around you?**

**How do you make giving a priority in your home?**

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## PRAYER FOR ENGAGED COUPLES

*Dear Lord, thank you for all the gifts you have given us.*

*Help us to remember that everything we have comes from you.*

*Be with all engaged couples as they plan their lives together.*

*Guide them in sharing the gifts that they bring to one another.*

*Nurture the gifts they will become when you make each couple one in you.*

*Amen.*



A Catholic Preparation for Marriage

[www.togetheringodslove.com](http://www.togetheringodslove.com)

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