



# White Paper Containing Excerpts from Various Documents on the **Sacrament of Marriage, Family and Remote Preparation** for Marriage

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## On Marriage

### **Catechism of the Catholic Church**

1601 “The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.”

### **Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan - A Pastoral Letter by the Catholic Bishops of the United States, 2009**

#### What Is Marriage?

Marriage is a lifelong partnership of the whole of life, of mutual and exclusive fidelity, established by mutual consent between a man and a woman, and ordered towards the good of the spouses and the procreation of offspring.<sup>1</sup> As the Second Vatican Council reminds us, marriage is not a purely human institution: - the intimate partnership of life and the love which constitutes the married state has been established by the creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws. . . . For God himself is the author of marriage.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, God has endowed marriage with certain essential attributes, without which marriage cannot exist as he intends.

The Church has taught through the ages that marriage is an exclusive relationship between one man and one woman. This union, once validly entered and consummated, gives rise to a bond that cannot be dissolved by the will of the spouses.<sup>3</sup> Marriage thus created is a faithful, privileged sphere of intimacy between the spouses that lasts until death.

Marriage is not merely a private institution, however. It is the foundation for the family, where children learn the values and virtues that will make good Christians as well as good citizens. The importance of marriage for children and for the upbringing of the next generation highlights the importance of marriage for all society. Conjugal love, the love proper to marriage, is present in the commitment to the complete and total gift of self between husband and wife. Conjugal love establishes a unique communion of persons through the relationship of mutual self-giving and receiving between husband and wife, a relationship by which —a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body [flesh]. (Gn 2:24).



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The Second Vatican Council speaks about conjugal love in words of great beauty:

The Lord, wishing to bestow special gifts of grace and divine love on married love, has restored, perfected, and elevated it. A love like that, bringing together the human and the divine, leads the partners to a free and mutual self-giving, experienced in tenderness and action, and permeating their entire lives; this love is actually developed and increased by its generous exercise.<sup>4</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> See Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd ed.) (CCC) (Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana–USCCB, 2000), no. 1601; Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition: New English Translation (Codex Iuris Canonici [CIC]) (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1998), cc. 1055.1, 1056-1057; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches: New English Translation (Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium [CCEO]) (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 2001), c. 776 §§1, 3, and c. 817.
- <sup>2</sup> Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes [GS]), no. 48, in Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing, 1996). All subsequent citations of Vatican II documents refer to this edition.
- <sup>3</sup> CIC, cc. 1056, 1134, 1141; CCEO, cc. 776 §3, 853.
- <sup>4</sup> GS, no. 49.

## The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World

### Familiaris Consortio – Pope John Paul II, 1981

3. Illuminated by the faith that gives her an understanding of all the truth concerning the great value of marriage and the family and their deepest meaning, the Church once again feels the pressing need to proclaim the Gospel, that is the "good news," to all people without exception, in particular to all those who are called to marriage and are preparing for it, to all married couples and parents in the world.

The Church is deeply convinced that only by the acceptance of the Gospel are the hopes that man legitimately places in marriage and in the family capable of being fulfilled.

Willed by God in the very act of creation, marriage and the family are interiorly ordained to fulfillment in Christ and have need of His graces in order to be healed from the wounds of sin and restored to their "beginning," that is, to full understanding and the full realization of God's plan.

At a moment of history in which the family is the object of numerous forces that seek to destroy it or in some way to deform it, and aware that the well-being of society and her own good are intimately tied to the good of the family, the Church perceives in a more urgent and compelling way her mission of proclaiming to all people the plan of God for marriage and the family, ensuring their full vitality and human and Christian development, and thus contributing to the renewal of society and of the People of God.



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14. According to the plan of God, marriage is the foundation of the wider community of the family, since the very institution of marriage and conjugal love are ordained to the procreation and education of children, in whom they find their crowning.

In its most profound reality, love is essentially a gift; and conjugal love, while leading the spouses to the reciprocal "knowledge" which makes them "one flesh," does not end with the couple, because it makes them capable of the greatest possible gift, the gift by which they become cooperators with God for giving life to a new human person. Thus the couple, while giving themselves to one another, give not just themselves but also the reality of children, who are a living reflection of their love, a permanent sign of conjugal unity and a living and inseparable synthesis of their being a father and a mother.

When they become parents, spouses receive from God the gift of a new responsibility. Their parental love is called to become for the children the visible sign of the very love of God, "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named."

It must not be forgotten however that, even when procreation is not possible, conjugal life does not for this reason lose its value. Physical sterility in fact can be for spouses the occasion for other important services to the life of the human person, for example, adoption, various forms of educational work, and assistance to other families and to poor or handicapped children.

### ***The Family, a Communion of Persons***

15. In matrimony and in the family a complex of interpersonal relationships is set up -married life, fatherhood and motherhood, filiation and fraternity - through which each human person is introduced into the "human family" and into the "family of God," which is the Church.

Christian marriage and the Christian family build up the Church: for in the family the human person is not only brought into being and progressively introduced by means of education into the human community, but by means of the rebirth of baptism and education in the faith the child is also introduced into God's family, which is the Church.

The human family, disunited by sin, is reconstituted in its unity by the redemptive power of the death and Resurrection of Christ. Christian marriage, by participating in the salvific efficacy of this event, constitutes the natural setting in which the human person is introduced into the great family of the Church.

The commandment to grow and multiply, given to man and woman in the beginning, in this way reaches its whole truth and full realization.

The Church thus finds in the family, born from the sacrament, the cradle and the setting in which she can enter the human generations, and where these in their turn can enter the Church.



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### ***Family, Become What You Are***

17. The family finds in the plan of God the Creator and Redeemer not only its identity, what it is, but also its mission, what it can and should do. The role that God calls the family to perform in history derives from what the family is; its role represents the dynamic and existential development of what it is. Each family finds within itself a summons that cannot be ignored, and that specifies both its dignity and its responsibility: family, become what you are.

Accordingly, the family must go back to the "beginning" of God's creative act, if it is to attain self-knowledge and self-realization in accordance with the inner truth not only of what it is but also of what it does in history. And since in God's plan it has been established as an "intimate community of life and love," the family has the mission to become more and more what it is, that is to say, a community of life and love, in an effort that will find fulfillment, as will everything created and redeemed, in the Kingdom of God. Looking at it in such a way as to reach its very roots, we must say that the essence and role of the family are in the final analysis specified by love. Hence the family has the mission to guard, reveal and communicate love, and this is a living reflection of and a real sharing in God's love for humanity and the love of Christ the Lord for the Church His bride.

Every particular task of the family is an expressive and concrete actuation of that fundamental mission. We must therefore go deeper into the unique riches of the family's mission and probe its contents, which are both manifold and unified.

Thus, with love as its point of departure and making constant reference to it, the recent Synod emphasized four general tasks for the family:

- 1) forming a community of persons;
- 2) serving life;
- 3) participating in the development of society;
- 4) sharing in the life and mission of the Church.

## **On Remote Preparation**

### **Familiaris Consortio – Pope John Paul II, 1981**

66. More than ever necessary in our times is preparation of young people for marriage and family life. In some countries it is still the families themselves that, according to ancient customs, ensure the passing on to young people of the values concerning married and family life, and they do this through a gradual process of education or initiation. But the changes that have taken place within almost all modern societies demand that not only the family but also society and the Church should be involved in the effort of properly preparing young people for their future responsibilities. Many negative phenomena which are today noted with regret in family life derive from the fact that, in the new situations, young people not only lose sight of



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the correct hierarchy of values but, since they no longer have certain criteria of behavior, they do not know how to face and deal with the new difficulties. But experience teaches that young people who have been well prepared for family life generally succeed better than others.

This is even more applicable to Christian marriage, which influences the holiness of large numbers of men and women. The Church must therefore promote better and more intensive programs of marriage preparation, in order to eliminate as far as possible the difficulties that many married couples find themselves in, and even more in order to favor positively the establishing and maturing of successful marriages.

Marriage preparation has to be seen and put into practice as a gradual and continuous process. It includes three main stages: remote, proximate and immediate preparation.

Remote preparation begins in early childhood, in that wise family training which leads children to discover themselves as being endowed with a rich and complex psychology and with a particular personality with its own strengths and weaknesses. It is the period when esteem for all authentic human values is instilled, both in interpersonal and in social relationships, with all that this signifies for the formation of character, for the control and right use of one's inclinations, for the manner of regarding and meeting people of the opposite sex, and so on. Also necessary, especially for Christians, is solid spiritual and catechetical formation that will show that marriage is a true vocation and mission, without excluding the possibility of the total gift of self to God in the vocation to the priestly or religious life.

### **Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage - Pontifical Council for the Family, 1996**

21. The stages or periods which will be discussed are not rigidly defined. In fact, they cannot be defined either in relation to the age of the participants, nor in relation to their duration. However, it is useful to be familiar with them as working itineraries and instruments, especially for the content to be transmitted. They are broken up into remote, proximate and immediate preparation.

#### ***A. Remote preparation***

22. Remote preparation includes infancy, childhood and adolescence and takes place first of all in the family and also in the school and formation groups, as a valid assistance to the family. This is the period in which respect for all authentic human values both in interpersonal and social relations is transmitted and instilled, with all this implies for the formation of character, self-control and self-esteem, the proper use of one's inclinations, and respect for persons of the other sex. Moreover, especially for Christians, a solid spiritual and catechetical formation is also required (cf. FC 66).

25. In this stage of remote preparation some specific objectives should be achieved. Without pretending to make a complete list of them, as an indication it is noted that above all this preparation should attain the goal whereby every member of the faithful called to marriage will



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understand completely that, in the light of God's love, human love takes on a central role in Christian ethics. In fact, as a vocation and mission, human life is called to the love that has its source and end in God, "without excluding the possibility of the total gift of self to God in the vocation to the priestly or religious life" (FC 66). In this sense, it should be recalled that even when remote preparation deals more with doctrinal content of an anthropological nature, it is to be placed in the perspective of marriage in which human love becomes a sharing, as well as a sign, of the love between Christ and the Church. Therefore, married love makes present among mankind the same divine love made visible in the redemption. The journey or conversion from a rather external and vague level of faith, typical of many young people, to a discovery of the "Christian mystery" is both essential and decisive: a faith that involves the communion of Grace and love with the Risen Christ.

26. Remote preparation will have achieved its main goals if it succeeds in instilling the essentials for acquiring more and more the parameters of a right judgment regarding the hierarchy of values needed in choosing the best that society has to offer, according to St. Paul's advice: "...test everything; hold fast what is good" (1 *Thessalonians* 5: 19). It should not be forgotten that, through the grace of God, love is also cherished, strengthened and intensified through the necessary values connected with giving, sacrifice, renunciation and self-denial. In this stage of formation, pastoral help should already be directed toward making moral behavior be supported by faith. The example of parents, which becomes a real *witness* for those who will marry in the future, provides stimulus, support and consistency to this kind of *Christian lifestyle*.

28. A *Christian lifestyle*, witnessed to by Christian families, is in itself a form of evangelization and the very foundation of remote preparation. In fact, another goal of this stage is the presentation of the parents' educational mission. It is in the family, the domestic church, that Christian parents are the first witnesses and educators of the children both in the growth of "faith, hope and charity", and in each child discovering his or her own vocation. "*Parents are the first and most important educators of their own children, and they also possess a fundamental competence in this area: they are educators because they are parents*" (GS 16). For this purpose parents need suitable and adequate assistance.

29. Among the types of assistance, the parish can be listed as the first place of Christian ecclesial formation. It is there that a style of living together as a *community* is learned (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 42). Moreover, the school, other educational institutions, movements, groups, Catholic associations and, of course, associations of Christian families must not be overlooked.

Of particular importance in the educational processes of young people are the means of mass communication which ought to aid the family's mission in society in a positive way and not make it difficult.

30. This educational process must also be taken to heart by catechists, animators of the pastoral care of youth and vocations and, above all, pastors who will take advantage of homilies during liturgical celebrations and other forms of evangelization, personal meetings, and ways of



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Christian commitment, in order to stress and highlight the points that contribute to a preparation directed toward possible marriage (cf. *Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium*, 14).

31. Therefore, the ways and means must be "invented" for the on-going formation of adolescents in the period preceding engagement which follows the stages of Christian initiation. Exchanging information about the most appropriate experiences in this regard is extremely useful. Families joined together in the parishes, institutions and different forms of association, help create a social atmosphere in which responsible love will be healthy. Wherever it may be corrupted, for example, by pornography, they can react through the family's right. All of this is part of a "human ecology" (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, 38).

### **Preparing for Marriage I: Remote Preparation - William E. May, 2010**

#### **Background and introduction**

Today many persons soon to be married are far more occupied with and interested in their wedding than they are with their marriage. Moreover, today there are competing and contradictory views about marriage. Some feminists claim that a heterosexual, misogynist patriarchy invented marriage as a way of enslaving women. Advocates of a secularist, atheistic (or at most nontheistic) understanding of human "persons" judge marriage a legal contract between persons, whether of opposite sexes or of the same sex, presently required to obtain certain benefits. They claim that marriage is a human invention, a cultural construct subject to radical change, and morally irrelevant to sexual behavior or to decisions whether or not to have children, who are viewed more frequently as burdens than as blessings. There are also those whose understanding of human existence is shaped by our Judeo-Christian heritage and "natural law". They affirm that God is the author of marriage, which they celebrate as the lifelong union of one man and one woman who pledge to be faithful to one another until death and who welcome children as gifts crowning their one flesh union, as blessings and not as burdens.

With others who seek to help build a "civilization of love" and develop a "culture of life," my understanding of marriage is that just described. I believe that in creating "man," "*male and female*," in his own image and likeness (see Genesis 1:28ff), God also created marriage. I likewise believe - and think that evidence drawn from many sources makes this belief "credible" - that it is not good for children to be generated in acts of fornication or adultery or "made" by the new reproductive technologies, as W. Bradford Wilcox, a professor of sociology at the University of Virginia has shown in numerous studies. Every human baby, no matter how generated, is a person of inviolable dignity, but God wills that babies be begotten in and through the marital act, an act proper and exclusive to spouses and one open both to love and to life.



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How then are we to prepare for marriage, particularly in our contemporary society? After calling attention to three different "stages" in the preparation for marriage, I will describe the procedure I will follow in this and future articles on marriage preparation.

### **The "Remote" Preparation for Marriage**

Pope John Paul II said that this stage begins "in infancy" and continues until the age "suitable" for youth (for most this would be during puberty). The "remote" stage in fact begins in the mother's womb. My focus is on the absolutely indispensable role that mothers and fathers play during this stage of marriage preparation.

#### **"Mothering" and "Fathering"**

A key principle of Montessori education is that an "environment" fitting for children must be "prepared" if they are to flourish and if their "absorbent minds" are to exercise their God-given thirst for learning and the truth. The very first "environment" affecting a human child is his or her mother's womb. As John Paul II noted, every new human life is entrusted to "each and every other human being, *but in a special way...to woman*, precisely because the woman in virtue of her special experience of motherhood is seen to have a *specific sensitivity* towards the human person" (Christifideles laici, 51 emphasis added; see also Mulieris Dignitatem, 30).

In Mulieris Dignitatem (Dignity and Vocation of Women),<sup>18</sup> John Paul said that the mother's unique contact with the child generates in her "an attitude toward human beings -- not only toward her own child but to every human being -- profoundly marking the woman's personality." He expresses agreement with the commonly held view that women "are more capable than men of paying attention to another person and that motherhood develops this predisposition even more." He then concludes: "The man - even with his sharing in parenthood - always remains 'outside' the process of pregnancy and the baby's birth; in many ways he has to *learn* his own 'fatherhood' from the mother."

#### **Women as mothers**

Studies have demonstrated that even while in their mother's wombs infants bond with their mothers and flourish if their mothers "welcome" them into this, their first "home." But these modern scientific studies simply support what women and mothers have known for centuries. Many scholars and others maintain that women become mothers "naturally." According to them men and women differ not only anatomically and physically but in the very depths of their being. Women sense differently, feel differently, think differently, love differently. Their own bodies, integral to their being as persons, give them more "clues" as to who they are. Unlike males, their fertility is periodical as they are being prepared to welcome a child into their wombs, and once a child is conceived their breasts begin to develop so that at the child's birth they are able to nourish him or her at their breast and care for him or her. There is at first a "symbiosis" of mother and child, and the child must gradually learn that he or she differs from his or her mother and girls find it easier to do this than boys because they simply have to





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distinguish themselves from their mothers as individuals, whereas boys must so distinguish themselves not only as individuals but as different in their own sexuality. [1]

### **Men as fathers**

But men do not become "fathers" naturally. They have to learn what a father ought to do in order to "father" his children. It is true that they learn this to a great extent from their wives, but they also learn it from their own fathers and from the example of other good fathers. And blest is the man whose father, like mine, cared deeply for him and helped his mother in her task of raising him.

Fathers must insert themselves into the bond between mother and child if the child is to develop a necessary "autonomy," one that recognizes too the natural law God has inscribed in the human heart. But this does not mean that maternal values are repudiated - fathers *ought* to embody mother-like attributes without ceasing to be fathers - but the exclusivity of the mother-bond is challenged by a loved family member whose own relationship to the child separates the child and orients it toward its personal future in extra-familial society. A woman is naturally inclined to nurture the child and is involved intimately in his or her education at all times but particularly during infancy and childhood. A man is naturally inclined to impose an order on things, whether it is the simple physical fact of initiating pregnancy, providing the home as shelter and protection, or the more spiritual tasks of disciplining the children physically and mentally, or undertaking the work of the wider social order. Thus the father, who also ought to be involved in his children's education at all times, is much more involved in and influential in it during their adolescence and young adulthood. As one writer, Benedict Ashley, O.P. put the matter: "Where the woman allows a child to grow, the father causes the child to grow" (Benedict Ashley, O.P., "Moral Theology and Mariology," *Anthropotes: Rivista di studi sulla persona e la famiglia* 7 (1991), 140).

Male children, as they grow into adolescence, need to know what husbands and fathers are to do, above all they must know that a husband must love his wife and never "abuse" her or treat her as a sex object. Girls too need to know this and to learn from their fathers, as well as from their mothers, two essential things: first, that they must treasure and guard their virginity until they marry, if they are to respect their own dignity; and second, the need for children (who, after all, can be conceived if they do not remain virgins) to be conceived and born of men and women who are "fit" to educate them in the love and service of God and neighbor, and that only men and women married to each other are so "fit."

In short, a key and absolutely necessary condition for marriage preparation during the "remote" stage from infancy through pubescence is that children, male and female, be given the environment of loving husbands and wives. In fact, the best gift a father can give his children is to love their mother as his irreplaceable, nonsubstitutable spouse, his "best" and "closest" earthly friend, and the best gift a mother can give her children is to love their father the same way.



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Professor May, at the appointment of Pope John Paul II, served on the International Theological Commission from 1986 through 1997. Pope John Paul also appointed him a “peritus” for the 1987 Synod of Bishops on the vocation and mission of the lay faithful in the Church and in the world. In September 2003 he was appointed a consultor to the Congregation for the Clergy. May has served as Visiting Professor at the Institute for the Psychological Sciences located in Arlington, VA and at the Notre Dame Graduate School of Christendom College. In September 2008 he became Senior Fellow at the Culture of Life Foundation. Professor May received the Cardinal Wright Award from the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Medal from James Cardinal Hickey, the Paul Ramsey Award for Outstanding Contributions to Bioethics from the Center for Bioethics and Culture, the St. Dominic Medal from the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C., and the Smith Award of University Faculty for Life for outstanding scholarly contributions to the pro-life movement.

Since 1958 he has been married to Patricia Keck May. They are the parents of seven children, four boys and three girls and are the grandparents of sixteen grandchildren.

### **Notes for William May’s Article:**

1. *There is abundant literature on this. See for instance, the following: Ruth Tiffany Barnhouse, "On the Difference Between Men and Women," in Male and Female: Christian Approaches to Sexuality, ed. Ruth Tiffany Barnhouse and Urban T. Holmes III (New York: Seabury, 1976), pp.3-16; Steven C. Clark, Man and Woman in Christ (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1980, chapter 1 of Part II; George Gilder, Sexual Suicide (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1973) chapters 1 and 2; Gilder, Men and Marriage (New York: Penguin, 1986); see also Carle Zimmermann and Lucius Cervantes, Marriage and the Family (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1960), pp. 137-292 (by Cervantes - both Cervantes and Zimmermann were Harvard Professors. Although the Zimmermann-Cervantes study was made in the late 50s and Barnhouse's Clark's in the late 70s and early 80s, there is a great similarity between the debates raging over male and female differences raging then and those raging today. Today Barnhouse and Clark oppose feminists like Susan Brownmiller, Germain Greer, and Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza , whereas Cervantes and Zimmermann opposed their earlier predecessors. More recent and more militant feminists who view marriage as an invention of heterosexual patriarchs to keep women in slavery are considered and identified by Marguerite Peeters' essay on this matter (see reference to her essay in footnote 1). Cervantes and Clark cite numerous studies by biologists, sociologists, anthropologists in support of their presentation. See also the material from contemporary sexologists used by Karol Wojtyla in the final chapter of his Love and Responsibility. A helpful essay on this subject is Manfred Lutz's "and Crises in the Relationship Between Man and Woman," in Men and Women: Diversity and Mutual Complementarity, pp. 47-62.*



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**This first meeting is to FOCUS on Remote preparation as defined in the document. Please prepare responses so as to reflect on the REMOTE – Thanks**

### **Study Questions for Discussion at Meeting**

1. What are the key teachings of the Catholic Church on Marriage?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What are the key teachings of the Catholic Church on family?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What do Church documents identify as the best ways to teach a proper understanding of marriage and family during the time of remote preparation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What actions/strategies are needed in our diocese in order to best promote a proper understanding of marriage and family during the time of remote preparation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. As the 'primary educators' parents play a critical role in remote preparation. How are we giving /can we give them confidence to witness to the teachings of the Church on marriage and family?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. The Church calls parents to be the 'primary educators' for their children and that all others (e.g. school teachers, religious education teachers, clergy, etc.) to collaborate in this formation. What can be done to help all others to understand this formational relationship and abide by it?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What is being done for remote preparation in your parish or deanery?