



Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth

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December 21, 2017

Dear Brother Bishops,

My greetings to you all as we anticipate the celebration of the Nativity of Our Lord. Once again, I am writing to inform you of the upcoming observance of National Marriage Week (Feb. 7-14, 2018) and World Marriage Day (Sunday, Feb. 11, 2018). Every year, it is an opportunity to focus on building a culture of life and love that begins with supporting and promoting marriage and the family. In 2018, World Marriage Day (celebrated on the second Sunday of February) coincides with the World Day of the Sick (Feb. 11).

This past year, the Conference continued its commitment to promoting and defending the sanctity of marriage. At the bishops' November plenary assembly, a vote was passed to develop a formal statement that would offer a renewed pastoral plan for marriage and family life ministry and advocacy in light of *Amoris Laetitia* under the lead of the Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth. Other work has included preparations for celebrating the 50th anniversary of *Humanae Vitae* next year, particularly the academic symposium to be hosted at The Catholic University of America next April 4-6, 2018 (<http://cuatoday.com/hv2018>).

The Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth (LMFLY) is grateful for the ongoing efforts in dioceses and parishes across the nation to promote, strengthen and defend marriage, as well as accompany engaged and married couples in their joys and struggles. To supplement these efforts, an extensive re-design project has almost been completed for the *For Your Marriage* website. The new website will continue to offer valuable articles, resources, and materials that touch upon every stage of pre-marital and married life. The rich content will be complemented by a new mobile-responsive design that hopes to attract and engage a wider audience. The new website will be launched during National Marriage Week in conjunction with a promotion campaign.

Brother bishops, on behalf of the Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth, I would like to highlight a few resources that we are pleased to offer your dioceses and parishes in celebration of National Marriage Week.

Preaching Resource – We are pleased to provide a preaching resource based on the scriptural readings for Sunday, Feb. 11 (enclosed). We hope the reflections, quotes, and references to Church teaching will inspire a homiletic theme on the sanctity of marriage with reference to the readings for the sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time. These readings, which focus on the healing power of God, relate to both the physically sick as well as to those who suffer spiritual and moral wounds in the areas of marriage and sexuality, and they also fit very well with the World Day of the Sick.

Bulletin Insert – Also provided is a bulletin insert that can be distributed in parishes during National Marriage Week or at any time (enclosed). In commemoration of the 50 years of *Humanae Vitae* (1968-2018), this insert includes quotes re-affirming the Church's teaching on married love and responsible parenthood.

Call to Prayer for Life, Marriage, and Religious Liberty – During National Marriage Week, dioceses and parishes might consider promoting Friday, February 9 as a day of prayer and sacrifice for this intention: “May all married couples and all in need of healing rely on God for their strength.” More about the Call to Prayer is available at usccb.org/pray.

For Your Marriage and Por Tu Matrimonio – An extensive collection of resources for couples who are married or preparing for marriage can be found in English and Spanish at ForYourMarriage.org and PorTuMatrimonio.org. Both sites also run Facebook pages, which will provide daily content during National Marriage Week: facebook.com/foryourmarriage and facebook.com/PorTuMatrimonio. Numerous resources for marriage can also be found on the USCCB website: usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/index.cfm.

Marriage: Unique for a Reason – This USCCB website offers resources to assist with the education and catechesis of Catholics on why marriage is unique and why it should be promoted and protected as the union of one man and one woman. Video and print materials can be found at marriageuniqueforareason.org. A new podcast series, “Made for Love,” will be launched in Jan. 2018.

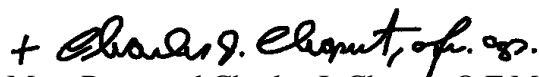
World Marriage Day – World Marriage Day (Sunday, Feb. 11) is sponsored by Worldwide Marriage Encounter. In 1993, Pope St. John Paul II imparted his Apostolic Blessing on World Marriage Day. For more resources including sample prayer intentions, a Holy Hour prayer service, renewal of vows ceremony and printable prayer cards, visit: wmd.wwme.org.

National Marriage Week USA – Lastly, National Marriage Week USA launched in 2010, is part of an international event seeking to mobilize individuals, organizations, and businesses in a common purpose to strengthen marriage in communities and influence the culture. It promotes marriage as a social and cultural benefit leading to greater wealth, health, longevity and happiness. For information and resources, visit: nationalmarriageweekusa.org. Dioceses may consider adding marriage conferences and retreats to the national calendar facilitated by National Marriage Week USA found on their website.

Thank you once more for this opportunity to highlight these resources in celebration of marriage. I would be grateful if you would share this information with the clergy and lay leaders of your diocese. May these upcoming observances, in addition to the 2018 World Meeting of Families in Dublin, foster an ever-deeper appreciation for the gift of marriage and the blessings of family life. May the Lord continue to reward you for proclaiming, defending and witnessing to the beauty and gift of marriage and the family.

With gratitude and prayerful best wishes for a joyful Christmas and happy New Year, I am

Fraternally yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.

Archbishop of Philadelphia

Chairman, Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth

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