A THEOLOGICAL COLLOQUIUM ON

Sponsored by the U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Marriage and Family Life And Hosted by the Institute for Church Life At the University of Notre Dame On

Understanding and Communicating the Sacramentality of Marriage in our Contemporary Culture

October 4-5, 2006 University of Notre Dame South Bend, IN

Panelists and Papers:

Systematic Theology
Joann Heaney-Hunter, Ph.D.
"Eros and Agape: Expressions of Love in Sacramental Marriage"

Biblical Theology
Gary Anderson, Ph.D.
"Marriage in the Book of Ruth"

Patristic Theology
John C. Cavadini, Ph.D.
"The Sacramentality of Marriage in the Fathers"

Biblical Theology
Pheme Perkins, Ph.D.

"'Acquire a Wife in Holiness and Honor' (1 Thess. 4:4): Christian
Marriage in the New Testament"

<u>Liturgical Theology</u> David Fagerberg, Ph.D. "Liturgical Marriage"

Moderator:

Anne Y. Koester, J.D., M.A. Associate Director Georgetown Center for Liturgy

Introduction to the program and papers:

Anne Koester recapped what had been discussed in the informal, introductory session held on the previous evening of Oct. 4. She drew attention to four common themes found in the papers:

- 1. The Sacrament of Marriage is a call to holiness of life. It is important to speak about marriage as a sacramental vocation.
- 2. Christian discipleship is essential to sacramental marriage. The couple's love spills over to service of others, and the couple is a Eucharistic presence in the world.
- 3. The sacrament is a process into which one grows and develops along the journey of life.
- 4. A couple grows into being a symbol and sacrament for the world, God's abiding presence in the world.

General discussion:

Anne Koester then summarized the highlights of the previous evening's discussion. The bishops are looking for language, stories and images that would convey the true meaning of Christian marriage to people in our contemporary American culture. Christ's role in marriage should be more of a focal point and the role of children in marriage should be emphasized. In regard to the audience for the Pastoral Initiative, the bishops should speak to the full range of married couples and be aware of all ethnic, educational, and socioeconomic factors in order to make it as accessible as possible. Many couples are in inter-church and inter-religious marriages, so it will be a challenge to speak to their specific experiences.

Formation and catechesis for marriage needs to be lifelong. As a corollary to this, there was a discussion of whether couples are being prepared to embrace the pattern of the cross and resurrection in their Christian married life.

Marriage is more than just about the couple themselves. There is a whole network of relationships that can help to sustain the marriage.

Some vagueness can arise when the term *sacrament* is discussed. It is necessary to be very clear about what we mean by sacrament and about the sacrament of marriage specifically. It needs to be located in reference to Christ and the Church, and within the sacramental system strictly speaking.

The virtues of Christian life are necessary for married life. People need to be equipped for living the Christian life and for cultivating friendship.

There was some discussion about how we can be more persuasive in finding ways to articulate the institutional dimension of marriage and its life within the Church.

It is important to teach young people that as they move toward marriage, they are actually discerning a vocational call from God. Marriage has an ecclesial dimension. It is at the service of the Church, and it is one of the charisms that is given to the baptized.

Presentation by Dr. Joann Heaney-Hunter:

Dr. Heaney Hunter said she thought *Deus Caritas Est* provided a new angle for looking at sacramentality of marriage. She explained that Pope Benedict was very explicit about the idea that the relationship between *eros* and *agape* is noble and at the heart of human life. The pope then applies this combination of the two types of love to married life and shows how married couples participate in it.

How exactly does this participation in *eros* and *agape* get carried out in married life? We need to link it to the Trinity and the sacraments of the Church. As symbols of Christ and symbols of the Trinity, married couples are called to live out the sacraments in daily life. Dr. Heaney-Hunter explained how she chose to explore couples living out the relationship between marriage and the Eucharist. She thinks of married life in terms of being blessed, broken, and shared, like the Eucharist. Part of the task of the sacramental couple in a family, the domestic church, is to recognize how daily things of life relate to life of the Eucharist and Trinity.

General Discussion of Dr. Heaney-Hunter's paper and presentation:

Openness to children was identified as a primary consideration when the essay states "In marriage a couple does not become enmeshed in themselves. Marriage leads to openness to others." Dr. Heaney-Hunter explained that her emphasis on openness to others arises from her experience in marriage and family therapy. She has seen couples who are so turned in on themselves that they can't see anyone else, much less children. She added that even though service to others is important, it should never be for its own sake, but a means to serve Christ in others.

Discussion continued on the topic of children. Children introduce the fact that the world is bigger than me or bigger than me and you. It is good to emphasize the importance of children in a family because they provide a way of very concretely organizing one's moral life. The lack of openness to children vitiates the sacrament of marriage. The issue about openness to children is very important, and it must be addressed in a positive way. However, it is important to make the case in such a way that the two purposes of marriage are bound together.

Even when couples are open to having children, their focus can still on what is going to fulfill them as a couple. Many couples' expectations for material possessions are excessive. It's important to present marriage as adventure open to life.

It was pointed out that, in teaching about the importance of openness to children, it is necessary to avoid giving the impression that big families are good and small families are bad. Not everyone's reason for having a small family is a selfish one.

The notion that "desire *for* God leads us to union *with* God" might better read "*can* lead us to God." We must communicate a realistic expectation for married couples. For example, we don't want to gloss over the joys of children, but it is also important to be realistic about the challenges they bring.

Though we don't want to just focus on the brokenness of marriage, the bishops do not want to risk putting forward such an idealistic vision that nobody can relate to it. There are ways of expressing a positive vision of marriage without making people feel inadequate to attaining it.

In a certain diocese 40-50% of the couples who prepare for marriage are inter-church couples. There was some concern that Eucharistic language may not be understood or may accentuate the differences within an inter-church marriage.

Possibly the bishops can find a way of addressing both couples who are Catholic and those who are in an inter-church marriage. The strength of *Follow the Way of Love* (1994 Pastoral Message of the U.S. Bishops to Families) was that it found ways to build on common ground with couples. Start with common ground rather than what's different. It is also a problem for baptized Catholics when one is a nonbeliever even though he or she is baptized. How do we raise up something as a value that they may see as irrelevant? We should not avoid our teaching on the Eucharist even though it is problematic for people in certain situations.

One of the challenges of teaching about marriage is to show people why indissolubility is a good thing. Permanence can often be seen as constraining and negative, so the bishops have to find a way of explaining the benefits of permanence. We must come up with concepts and words that explain that indissolubility is a blessing and not a curse. It is important to start with the idea that binding is a blessing. The permanence of marriage binds the couple to their future together. We must persuade people, like an attorney arguing a case, that a desire for God can lead to union with God. What stories can be used to convey this belief?

The indissolubility of marriage is the condition for the possibility for true intimacy. This is a positive dimension of our teaching; it is attractive and can appeal to couples' deepest desire. There was a time in the Church when indissolubility was taken for granted. However, the question was raised about whether the number of annulments has weakened, in a practical sense, the argument for the indissolubility of marriage. Heaney-Hunter spoke about her tribunal experience with people seeking annulments. She said most of them have met their fragility and failure and sinfulness head on and they're trying to bring closure to what was very terrible time in their lives. She explained that she, too, has had the fear that annulments are weakening the teaching on indissolubility. Yet, most of the people she sees seeking an annulment are looking for healing, and another marriage is beside the point. She did mention a certain population that needs particular care. She has seen couples who are 35 to 40 years old who divorce very soon after they marry because they have grown accustomed to the independence of single life and their expectations of married life are unrealistic.

Finally, there was a brief discussion, based on the Heaney-Hunter paper, of the notion of *eros* within the Holy Trinity. She was asked if she might develop this concept specifically with regard to Christ and, referencing the Letter to the Ephesians, the nuptial bond between Christ and the Church. Heaney-Hunter said she thought this could be done.

Presentation by Dr. John Cavadini:

Dr. Cavadini explained that he saw his task specifically as retrieving what Augustine had to say about marriage. Augustine connected the theology of marriage to the theology of Church, thereby connecting marriage to a theology of Christian life. This can reinforce the idea of the domestic Church.

The idea of the sacramentality of marriage is genuinely present in Augustine. It is there but in a different key than in Thomas Aquinas. The sacrament is an efficacious sign which mediates Christ to us.

Cavadini illustrated Augustine's understanding of marriage by pointing to these specific ideas in his paper:

- 1. Christian life is a life in transition, of transformation, a life of purification. You can talk about it as a life of healing from brokenness.
- 2. Transformation of desire is a transformation by incorporation into body of Christ. By being made a member of the Church, we are transformed.
- 3. Our relationship with Christ is ecclesially mediated through the unity with each other in the Church. As members of the Church, we know ourselves to be loved spousally by Christ. The origin of sacraments in the Church, the Incarnation, defines what spousal love is. It is incarnational. Being a member of the body of Christ is to be configured to the spousal love of Christ. Marriage affords a way of life that mediates that love. We are transformed in incorporation. By this, he means that in marriage, one encounters the marrying love of Christ that created the Church.
- 4. It is not sexual union per se that signifies the two in one flesh that is Christ and the Church; rather, it is the intimacy of life, body, and spirit. Indissolubility permits a complete and permanent intimacy, in which the purifying and healing can take place. Because of indissolubility, all of the difficulties of marriage acquire a dimension of the sacrificial love of Christ.

Cavadini said that he thinks it would be good to reconnect the theology of marriage to the idea of Eucharist. It would be helpful to relate Eucharist as sacrifice to marriage as sacrifice. He recalled Heaney-Hunter's concept of being blessed, broken, and shared through marriage.

Cavadini offered some thoughts on the question of procreation. For Augustine, sex is oriented by the Creator towards procreation. Part of married humility is maintaining an openness to procreation. Humility in marriage is partly a discipline of openness and of attentiveness to other. The discipline of openness to children is openness to life in a very literal way. Augustine links humility of openness to procreation to the idea of being incorporated into Christ.

Finally, Cavadini pointed out that it isn't appropriate to talk about the Sacrament of Marriage without also talking about ideals of virginity and celibacy.

General Discussion of Dr. Cavadini's paper and presentation:

It was noted that Augustine spoke of the "excellence" or "good" of marriage. This would seem to resonate with people's desire today for an excellent marriage. However, placing such a marriage in the context of sacrifice and the virtue of humility is important. The notion of listening in marriage and being open is key.

In addition, reference was made to an idea in the paper on page 18, "A couple might be 'two in one flesh' at the time of intercourse, but the indissolubility of marriage makes this 'two in one fleshness' a permanent condition, a matter not simply of body but of spirit." This focus on marriage as a permanent condition is part of making the case for indissolubility as a good, as part of a path toward excellence in marriage.

A point was made about relating marriage to baptism. Understanding the sacrament of baptism and its effects can help us to appreciate Christian marriage.

Another point was raised about the relationship between the theology of marriage and the theology of the body, with its focus on the importance and beauty of sex. Cavadini replied that he certainly doesn't want to preach that sex is bad, but, at the same time, it is possible to overemphasize the goodness of sex. In order to keep sex good, you have to be humble, and this is not an easy thing to do.

In discussion it was observed that Pope Benedict XVI discussed the importance of the transition from *eros* to *agape* in *Deus Caritas Est*. This makes sense in the context of theology of the body. Nonetheless it is possible that a theology of body can romanticize sex. There is a fine line to walk when discussing sex. Augustine offers a corrective to the romanticizing of sex. People shouldn't be frustrated that sex is not perfect. Cavadini agreed, pointing out that *eros* is not a straight path to *agape*.

It was noted also that John Paul II talked about lust within marriage. A couple doesn't start with perfection. We should hold up the ideal in our Pastoral Initiative but also admit that marriage is a growing process full of imperfections. The ideas of sacrifice and Eucharist came up again. Since love is sacrificial, the idea of the couple giving life would be very important for the pastoral letter. Love can only be sustained through sacrifice. It seems that many couples want communion, but they don't understand that the bond they want can only be sustained and initiated sacrificially.

So many people come to marriage preparation broken, believing that their future spouse is going to be the one to heal them. But that isn't always the case. The notion of sacrificial love is important, as well as the notion of the permanent intimacy of mind, body, and spirit. All the different forms of intimacy need to be emphasized, not just the physical. It is a challenge to make the theology of the body simple enough for average people to understand.

Younger generations of people seem to be going in the opposite direction of the Church. They don't understand the salience of belonging to the Church. We need to look at the practical question of how we reach younger people in particular, for whom this talk about being

incorporated into the Church has less and less meaning. Also, statistics show that fewer people are choosing to be married in the Church every year. Cavadini responded that we have to meet the challenge. He said he has never met a young person not inspired by an ideal persuasively articulated. It is important to state our ideals clearly, in marriage preparation, but also from the pulpit. We've lost our confidence that the teaching on marriage is a beautiful ideal. Maybe we need to look at the evangelical churches and their confidence. We need to have the confidence that we have a beautiful ideal that can be communicated.

The question was raised about those who claim they are spiritual but not religious. After the wedding, they often have no connection to the church. It was pointed out that marriage is the first point at which these people come back to the Church. Marriage preparation is the most important teaching moment for people who have left the Church. It is a challenge, but it is also a moment of hope. The Church must welcome people home in marriage preparation. Also, the baptism of a child is an important time to welcome people back.

There is a temptation among some in the Church to create a self-fulfilling prophecy. If we are timid when we proclaim, then no one will listen to the teaching on marriage. The baptism of the first child is a very important point of contact with the Church. Often something in high school and college turns someone away from the Church, but just because there is distance doesn't mean the relationship is severed. Young people will follow an ideal if it is presented well; they have a tremendous need for belonging.

Cavadini observed that it is important for couples to have a support network of other couples who encourage each other. Others agreed, citing the importance of couples helping a couple in need. This practical expression of support highlights the notion of marriage as ecclesial. Marriage is a visible sign of the purifying love of the Church. Celibate pastors need to recognize the importance of marriage within the life of the Church. Because professional counselors often counsel toward divorce, it is a good idea to form young couples' groups in parishes. It is also important for priests to devote time to spiritually mentoring couples. It is essential to connect catechesis about marriage with the Scripture readings for Mass so that priests can preach on marriage.

Discussion turned to the kind of language that will be used in the pastoral letter. It needs to reach all sorts of people. The Pastoral Initiative is for Catholics seeking Christ. It should help people share their own stories and give them a deeper understanding of what it means to be a Christian. Cavadini agreed that the initiative should be accessible, but he noted that pastoral documents can be read on different levels. We should strive for a multivalent letter. He said that another audience besides married couples would be pastors, so the pastoral letter has to be explicit enough to help pastors form people.

Presentation by Dr. Gary Anderson:

Dr. Anderson outlined the three things he was going to discuss in his presentation: (1) the subject of sexual fertility and children in the book of Ruth; (2) the way sexuality works in the Old Testament, with a discussion of contraception and homosexuality; and (3) the relationship between law and love.

The book of Ruth is organized around the themes of the fertility of the land and the fertility of the womb. The book opens with Naomi leaving the infertile land of Judea, but she leaves full with respect to family. Her two children, though, have been married for 10 years and haven't produced children. God then visits the land of Judea and returns it to prosperity, and this makes Naomi decide to come home to Judea. But Bethlehem is not a place of consummate fertility like it should be.

Naomi is bitter because Ruth and Naomi are bereft of family and in utter poverty. But Ruth goes out empty to glean grain, and she comes back full with grain due to the generosity of Boaz. Also, Ruth goes forth empty of child but comes back eventually with child. God will visit Ruth and gives her a child through Boaz. This is made clear though the sexual image of Boaz filling Ruth's sack with grain.

Boaz was struck by Ruth's sacrifice to go to Judea with her mother-in-law. Also, she suppressed her own interests in order to serve the interests of the larger family by looking for a spouse not just to her liking. Ruth has put the procreative element before the unitive, and her own happiness behind the good of her family.

As a side note, Anderson said that the notion of marriage in Ruth is that having a husband provides not only a home, but also provides rest, which resonates with a larger sense of spiritual benefaction.

One of the other things important in this story is the difference between Ruth and Orpah, Naomi's two daughters-in-law. Orpah does not follow Naomi. Ruth is making an extraordinary decision, rather than a good one when she clings to Naomi. Orpah is making a reasonable decision. Also, Boaz is making an extraordinary decision rather than a good one when he provides for Ruth. These characters in Ruth are obeying Torah by going beyond Torah. Virtue can't surface without commandments, but we have to go beyond the commandments.

A commandment very dear to the Book of Ruth is honoring your father and mother. Ruth goes beyond the commandment by going with Naomi, who is not her mother but her mother-in-law.

Another example of procreation coming before unity in the Old Testament was the law that a brother must give his brother's widow children. It is so important in the OT to have children because they provided economic stability.

Anderson then raised questions about contraception and homosexuality. He noted that Leviticus forbids homosexuality, but it forbids eating shellfish as well. In light of the differing levels of law in Leviticus, what should one make of the prohibition against homosexuality? In the Old Testament, the prohibition relates directly to how procreation should be essential to any sexual union. Lifelong homosexuality was an impossible thing to imagine in Old Testament times because having children was so important.

In summary, the Book of Ruth is a good place to see how marriage is viewed in the OT. It shows the importance of children and fertility and of fulfilling the law by going beyond it.

Another story about procreation and contraception is the story of David and Bathsheba. When David sees Bathsheba, she is completing her menstrual cycle. This is important because it is clear that the child Bathsheba gets pregnant with will be David's child. Also, in Rabbinic law, one cannot engage in sexual relations while the woman is menstruating and then seven days beyond the time her menstruation ends. This means that a couple can have intercourse at the woman's most fertile time. The procreative element is front and center in the way that Jewish laws govern when a couple can have sex.

Anderson also noted the view of Orthodox Jews that one should be very cautious about using birth control. It cannot be used to eliminate children, but to space children, following the advice of rabbi.

General Discussion of Dr. Anderson's paper and presentation:

In response to a question about the meaning of rest in the OT, Anderson explained that one rests on the Sabbath to enjoy God. He noted that the rest marriage offers cannot be separated from the rest God offers. Developing this idea of Sabbath rest provides an antidote to our frenetic culture.

Discussion of marriage in the OT world led to a conclusion about the importance of understanding marriage in a larger context. In India, for instance, most marriages are still arranged, and there is no divorce. When the emphasis is too much on romantic ideals, the relationship becomes imbalanced. We must take what is good in our own culture, but we must reorient it in the context of the bigger picture the people of the Old Testament understood so clearly.

Anderson noted that it is important to tap into what secular people still do understand about marriage. He told a story about a secular woman he knows who became very traditional when it came to her own daughters. She became very concerned when her daughter was dating a man who didn't go home for Christmas because it reflected badly on him and the whole family.

In response to a point about homosexuality being a disorder that directly bears on procreation, Anderson first pointed out that we are all disordered in our sexual desires. He then said he agreed that there was not a good argument against homosexuality outside of the importance of procreation. He said that homosexuality is a smaller question. It is important to focus first on marriage.

There was appreciation expressed for Anderson's including the letter from Dietrich Bonhoeffer at the beginning of his paper. The message it contains would be great in marriage preparation. Anderson's argument about openness to children is an important one for people to hear. It is important to keep in mind that one positive aspect of having children is that they provide emotional support later in life. Economics may not play as big a role as it did in Old Testament times, but children are still needed as they were then.

Discussion returned to the topic of arranged marriages. They work because family involvement is so important. The couple knows that their parents want what is good for them. It could be that internet dating websites are our society's way of arranging marriages. They make it clear that people feel they need help with finding a spouse.

Marriage is about families coming together. In marriage preparation it is useful to remind people of the importance of liking their future in-laws. Anderson gave an example of the importance of family of origin. He said his wife learned early on the importance of caring for people because her grandparents lived with her family when she was growing up.

Finally, it was suggested that the fact of Ruth's marriage being a contract should not be forgotten. Our tendency today is to say that contracts are to be looked down upon and covenants to be preferred, but the idea of the contract of marriage is still a part of our canon law. Marriage cannot be separated from the contract.

General Discussion of Dr. Pheme Perkins' paper:

NOTE: Dr. Perkins was prevented by bad weather from attending the colloquium. Nonetheless, the floor was opened at this point for reactions to her paper.

Ann Koester pointed out that a theme that echoes in the paper is the path to holiness of life, which is found in the letter to the Thessalonians. The question is how to form people in that call to holiness of life. How do we convey to people that they indeed can live a holy life? How can we get past poor self-perception to show them that they can?

Discussion began about how men and women relate to each other in the light of the mutual submission urged upon them in the Letter to the Ephesians. The issue is a challenging one on which churches have varying viewpoints. If we are going to treat it in the pastoral letter then our approach must have a Scriptural basis, but one which recognizes the full teaching of St. Paul in its proper context. This passage in Ephesians 5:22-33 does not contain our full teaching about Christian marriage.

Dr. Perkins' paper makes the point that, inasmuch as it's a charism, Christian marriage relies on Spirit. It is not confined to what human beings make of it.

Yet, at the same time human freedom and responsibility are important. We humans suffer as a result of our sins. For example, being casual about sexuality brings bad consequences.

Presentation by Dr. David Fagerberg:

Dr. Fagerberg opened by saying that he thought the saddest approach to marriage is marriage by default, settling for less than had been hoped for. He wants to put marriage in the context of the Gospel's invitation, and show that it is not settling at all. In marriage, we are to become like God. This is because the hypostatic union is available to us.

He went on to say that liturgy is doing the world in the way it should have been done. Life should become liturgical. Within this sacramental liturgical life, we see that marriage is a process for sacramental liturgical existence. Every marriage is being called forward to be transformed, including non-Catholic marriages.

Natural virtues are perfected in supernatural virtues. There is marriage and there is Christian marriage. One of the questions before the Committee is whether to deal with marriage generally or with Christian marriage. Fagerberg wants to look at Christian marriage, where the married couple are tools for liturgical *askesis* (training) for each other.

He brought up the doctrine of conditional joy of Chesterton, saying that he thinks we lose sight of the joy of marriage because we don't see the whole of marriage. Fagerberg then read a quotation from C.S. Lewis' Space Trilogy about the process of marriage and the importance of making meaning of marriage, of remembering meaning by looking back on the whole of the marriage.

In closing, Fagerberg noted that liturgical life is eschatological, and in that sense we are all remembering forward to the eschaton. The sacramental life of marriage, too, is lived forward in expectation of the eschaton.

General Discussion of Dr. Fagerberg's paper and presentation:

A question was raised about whether the bishops should focus on the ideal of an excellent marriage or deal with real problems of day. The bishops could start with the ideal, but be cautious about over-romanticizing marriage. The discussion in Fagerberg's paper about what the marriage vows are and are not is a particularly helpful guide in this matter.

Fagerberg reiterated that pleasure is full grown only when it is remembered, and that the Church wants to look at the big picture of full grown love. To do that, we need to connect the daily events of nurturing and being with our families to eternal life. To illustrate, he explained how, looking back, there was so much meaning in the simple acts of feeding his children lunch and in picking up the peas that they dropped on the carpet. Clearly, a father doesn't find all his meaning in serving lunch, but it's part of what is rewarding. When the Church does liturgy, we see the world properly. We see the whole. It is important to see a whole marriage, to see it in context. The Church doesn't replace the world, it tells the world what its appetites are really geared towards. The appetites should be geared towards God. We need to awaken a hunger for the infinite, and this would bring about a "stunning normalcy" to the world, as Aidan Cavanaugh refers to it.

Fagerberg's emphasis on the unity of the sacred and ordinary was noted with appreciation. The same is true of his discussion of the complementarity of men and women.

Emphasis should be placed on the importance of marital piety and family piety, which means day to day liturgical life in prayer. This family piety is important, and it needs to go beyond Sunday mass attendance. Fagerberg agreed, saying that doing things such as keeping fasts and having sacramentals makes the Church palpably present in the home.

Christian marriage today really has to be countercultural. In response to this, Fagerberg said that in living out liturgy people become stunningly normal and provide a good counter-cultural witness by doing such simple things as stay faithful and putting family before work. Liturgical *askesis* (training) of marriage allows the spouse to be made over in the image of God. The married couple assists one other in a journey toward holiness, and that *askesis* is undergone in a unique way in marriage. We are challenged to find the ways of translating these images and concepts for ordinary people.

Closing Discussion

Anne Koester set three main tasks before the group, including: 1. the need to think concretely about language and images to address marriage as sacrament and give further thought to the meaning of the sacramentality of marriage; 2. the need to come up with stories about marriage for the pastoral; and 3. the need to think about what different vehicles will be used in this initiative to address different audiences. Participants responded to these tasks with the following ideas.

There is a key insight in Dr. Anderson's paper, namely, "it is not your love that sustains the marriage, it is the marriage that sustains the love." The sustaining power of the sacrament and its grace is an important belief to emphasize.

Some concepts that could be addressed in the main pastoral letter include: (1) the Trinity as the foundation of Christian life and marriage and family life, including the life-giving aspect of the Trinity and of married love; (2.) the importance of sacrificial love as a foundation, sustainer, and life-giver in marriage; (3) why indissolubility is good for marriage; (4) the healing nature of marriage for Augustine; (5) the way in which marriage shares in the eschaton. Materials that could support the pastoral letter could include pamphlets, a video, and an exegesis on Ephesians.

The importance of the theology of domestic church cannot be forgotten because building households of faith is at the heart of what we're trying to do. We already have a good foundation to build on in the idea of domestic church. Also, the idea that indissolubility gives the freedom to be intimate is important, and it addresses the problem of cohabitation.

The language of "knowing that he or she will not run away" underscores the freedom to be intimate that indissolubility gives. We must address the potential erosion of the language of indissolubility that annulments introduce as well. This wouldn't be in the main pastoral, but in a supplementary document. We might also speak about virtue and friendship with regard to marriage. Other points to draw out about marriage are: (1) a focus on excellence and using the letter to inspire excellence; (2) an acknowledgement that such excellent aspirations are not easy; (3) the idea that the adventure of marriage is worth it and the community sustains it; and (4) marriage requires and involves a purifying, humbling process.

It is important for people to realize that marriage is not just about me, but it is about something bigger. Auxiliary material could include information on sexuality and cohabitation. Premarital

sex is primarily an issue of integrity. It is dishonest to say I give you myself wholly with my body and not to have a full commitment to that person.

The concept of vocation and holiness in marriage should be emphasized, along with the need people have for assistance in discerning a vocation to marriage. Christ calls people to marriage, so it is important to use the language of being called. Also, it's not just a one time call. The concept of call sheds light on the teaching about indissolubility. Once God calls, it's permanent. Marriage shapes a family, creates a family, and families, in turn, create a marriage.

The connection between indissolubility and the freedom to be intimate is essential. But maybe we should go further and say indissolubility affords us the freedom to give. People are not inclined to give, to invest in something if they cannot be confident it's going to last. Maybe this links to the issue of having or not having children too.

The idea of a marriage being part of something bigger is connected to the notion of marriage being an ecclesial charism. Having the grace of the sacrament of marriage is the foundation of marriage because it guarantees the presence of the Holy Spirit. Fagerberg's image of picking up peas for his children is an extension of that sacrament.

It is important to link the two purposes of marriage together. Part of connecting the goods of marriage is to think about the spirituality of marriage. What is it in marriage that connects these goods?

Marriage connects us to the Church and to Christ. Concerning how to define sacrament, it is essential to say that sacraments are efficacious signs that present what they represent. We should use words such as sign and instrument, and the definition must be linked to a connection between the goods of marriage.

A definition of sacrament offered by St. Isidore is "when you see one thing and understand another." What do we see? What is it that we understand? Augustine's language about the Eucharist ("be what you receive") might also be applied to marriage as a sacrament. The fact that the husband and wife are ministers of the sacrament is important; they minister to each other for a lifetime

Also, we should tie marriage to the Eucharist with the phrase "blessed, broken, and shared." In reference to the "broken" aspect, without pain, there is no gain in marriage. We must stress the importance of virtues as acts because marriage is action-oriented, a day-in and day-out process. Actions build virtue and holiness and bring life to a family. Christian marriage is countercultural, and it leads to blessings.

Marriage should be presented as an adventure. A couple should be willing not to have to know the future, but to be confident in God's fidelity, for he has led them into the marriage. Marriage is a heroic calling, a call to heroism in love. Couples say that it's so hard to find time for each other. They need to be told that your spouse and family needs to a priority. We give time to what we value.

We want to inspire people, and we need to focus on not placing too many qualifications. We must resist the temptation to reduce the capacity to inspire because we want to cover every aspect of the question. A clear statement of an ideal is what we need. It needs to be made available to preachers. The bishops should renew a culture of talking about an ideal and remind themselves that they have a precious thing in sacramental marriage that is intrinsically persuasive. After the ideal is stated, what further vehicles would be used for promulgating it and putting it into action? Also, what are the stories that can convince people of the good of the ideal?

The NPR program called Story Corps provides a good example of collecting ordinary, but inspiring stories. Perhaps the bishops could do something like it. For instance, we could record the stories of regular married people who are celebrating 50 years of marriage. The USCCB has done features on recently ordained priests. Maybe the bishops could do something like that featuring married people. In the stories chosen for the initiative, the bishops should seek to convey the full truth about marriage. The stories should portray a lifelong, exclusive commitment that is open to life.

There should be stories to attract men and encourage them. Scriptural stories can be very freeing for men. Catholics should learn how to do this as well, particularly by paying attention to evangelical groups. The bishops should use biblical stories, and real-life stories should also be used to reinforce the biblical stories. The most important thing is to make the Bible relevant to daily life. The new catechism for adults might be a good place to see how to incorporate stories.

The audience for the pastoral letter should be married couples, pastors, engaged couples, and people of diverse cultural backgrounds as well. Maybe one or more stories that are told should relate to younger people and the idea of discernment of marriage. Marriage formation cuts across generations, in its remote (children), proximate (youth), and immediate (engaged people) forms.

We'll have to decide what needs to be developed in the Initiative. There is a statement of principle, but how far are we going to take that? Are we going to develop catechetical materials or marriage preparation materials? Would we put on a series of workshops with diocesan family life ministers? We are going to have to talk about this and develop a package.

The desire for the USCCB to approach its work organically needs to be taken into account. We should not take on as a committee things that other committees could take on. We need to challenge other committees to take responsibility, and we need to make efforts to go to NACFLM meetings and Engaged and Marriage Encounter meetings to encourage those leaders to step forward and take the initiative. Collaboration with other groups is important, but we have to develop strategies about how to seek and manage that kind of collaboration.

Resources that could distributed widely on CD or DVD are very useful. So also is summarizing the pastoral letter according the needs of different target populations, such as engaged couples, those who need marriage enrichment, et al. Marketing is important. It would be good to have radio spots and quality advertisements.

Bishop Kurtz concluded by thanking everyone for attending and sharing their thoughts.