

## **Love and Life In The Divine Plan Suggested Bulletin Announcements**

*(Courtesy of Deacon William Urbine, Diocese of Allentown)*

These bulletin announcements are directly excerpted from the U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter entitled **Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan**. Consider running these over the course of several weeks, so that parishioners get used to seeing the theme reinforced.

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### **Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: A Natural and Spiritual Blessing**

“While marriage is a special blessing for Christians because of the grace of Christ, marriage is also a natural blessing and gift for everyone in all times and cultures. It is a source of blessing to the couple, to their families, and to society and includes the wondrous gift of co-creating human life.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

### **Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: 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.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

### **Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Children**

“Marriage is not merely a private institution. 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.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

### **Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Two Become One**

“Marriage, the clinging together of husband and wife as one flesh, is based on the fact that man and woman are both different and the same. They are different as male and female, but the same as human persons who are uniquely suited to be partners or helpmates for each other. The difference between man and woman, however, cannot be restricted to their bodies, as if the body could be separated from the rest of the human person. The human person is a union of body and soul as a single being. Man and woman are two different ways of being a human person.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

### **Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Helpmates**

“Marriage is a unique communion of persons. In their intimate union as male and female, the spouses are called to exist for each other. Just as Genesis describes Eve as a helper for Adam, we can see that in marriage, a husband and wife are meant to help each other through self-giving.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/laity/loveandlife/>.

### **Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: The Human Body**

“Pope John Paul II’s theology of the body speaks of the human body as having a spousal significance. This means that the human body by its very nature signifies that we humans are directed to relationship—that we are to seek union with others. It is only in relationship that we achieve a true wholeness as a communion of persons.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: God’s Love, Our Love**

“God established marriage so that man and woman could participate in his love and thus selflessly give themselves to each other in love. A man and a woman who by their act of consent are no longer two but one flesh (see Mt 19:6ff.) render mutual help and service to each other through an intimate union of their persons and of their actions.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Procreation**

“It is the nature of love to overflow, to be life-giving. Thus, it is no surprise that marriage is ordained not only to growing in love but to transmitting life. ‘By its very nature the institution of marriage and married love [is] ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory’” (*Gaudium et Spes*). To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Life-Affirming**

“Even when their child-bearing years have passed, a couple should continue to be life-affirming. They can do this by staying involved in the lives of young people, and especially their grandchildren, as spiritual mentors, teachers, and wisdom figures.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Unitive and Procreative**

“Conjugal love expresses the unitive meaning of marriage in such a way as to show how this meaning is ordered toward the equally obvious procreative meaning. The unitive meaning is distorted if the procreative meaning is deliberately disavowed...Likewise, the procreative meaning of marriage is degraded without the unitive.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Society’s Challenges**

“We recognize that couples face many challenges to building and sustaining a strong marriage. Some challenges, however, are fundamental in the sense that they are directed at the very meaning and purposes of marriage. (Here) we want to discuss four such challenges: *contraception, same-sex unions, divorce, and cohabitation.*” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Contraception**

“By using contraception, married couples may think that they are avoiding problems or easing tensions, that they are exerting control over their lives. At the same time, they may think that they are doing nothing harmful to their marriages. In reality, the deliberate separation of the procreative and unitive meanings of marriage has the potential to damage or destroy the marriage. Also, it results in many other negative consequences, both personal and social.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Reproductive Technology**

“The procreative capacity of man and woman should not be treated as just another means of technology, as also happens with *in vitro* fertilization (IVF) or cloning. When that

happens, human life itself is degraded because it becomes, more and more, something produced or manufactured in various ways, ways that will only multiply as science advances. Children begin to be seen less as gifts received in a personal communion of mutual self-giving, and increasingly as a lifestyle choice, a commodity to which all consumers are entitled.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Responsible Parenthood**

“[Finally], living according to God’s design for love and life does not mean that married couples cannot plan their families. The principle of responsible parenthood describes the way spouses can work with God’s gift of fertility. Spouses can recognize their own duties towards God, themselves, their families and human society as they decide when to try to achieve a pregnancy or conclude that there are sufficiently serious reasons to justify postponing one.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Natural Family Planning**

“Natural family planning (NFP) methods represent authentic family planning. They can be used both to achieve and to postpone a pregnancy. NFP makes use of periodic abstinence from sexual intercourse based upon the observation of the woman’s natural signs of fertility, in order to space births or to limit the number of children when there is a serious reason to do so. NFP methods require that couples learn, accept, and live with the wonders of how God made them. This is essentially different from contraception.”

To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Same-Sex Unions**

“Marriage is a unique union, a relationship different from all others. It is the permanent bond between one man and one woman whose two-in-one-flesh communion of persons is an indispensable good at the heart of every family and every society. Same-sex unions are incapable of realizing this specific communion of persons. Therefore, attempting to redefine marriage to include such relationships empties the term of its meaning, for it excludes the essential complementarity between man and woman, treating sexual difference as if it were irrelevant to what marriage is.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Similar, but Different**

“Male-female complementarity is intrinsic to marriage. It is naturally ordered toward authentic union and the generation of new life. Children are meant to be the gift of the permanent and exclusive union of a husband and a wife. A child is meant to have a mother and a father.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Between a Man and a Woman**

“Jesus teaches that marriage is between a man and a woman. ‘Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator made them male and female...For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’ (Mt 19:4-6).” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Relativism**

“By attempting to redefine marriage to include or be made analogous with homosexual partnerships, society is stating that the permanent union of husband and wife, the unique pattern of spousal and familial love, and the generation of new life are now only of

relative importance rather than being fundamental to the existence and well-being of society as a whole.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Domestic Violence**

“In some cases, divorce may be the only solution to a morally unacceptable situation. A specific example is a home where the safety of a spouse and children is at risk. As the Catholic bishops of the United States, we reiterate what we said in our pastoral message on domestic violence, *When I Call for Help*, namely, that no one in a marriage is obliged to maintain common living with an abusing spouse. We want to assure people who are caught in the tragedy of an abusive marriage that the Church is committed to offering them support and assistance.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Annulments**

“We encourage divorced persons who wish to marry in the Catholic Church to seek counsel about the options that exist to remedy their situation, including the suitability of a declaration of nullity when there is no longer any hope of reconciliation of the spouses. Such a declaration is a finding by a church tribunal, or court, that no valid marriage bond was formed because the requirements for valid consent were not met at the time of the wedding. If a declaration of nullity is granted, and there are no other restrictions, both parties are free to marry in the Catholic Church.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Effects of cohabitation**

“Social science research, however, finds that cohabitation has no positive effects on a marriage. In some cases, cohabitation can in fact harm a couple’s chances for a stable marriage. More importantly, though, cohabitation involves the serious sin of fornication. It does not conform to God’s plan for marriage and is always wrong and objectively sinful.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Imitating Christ**

“Christian spouses are called to this imitation of Christ, an imitation that is possible only because, in the Sacrament of Matrimony, the couple receives a participation in his love. As a sacrament, marriage signifies and makes present in the couple Christ’s total self-gift of love. Their mutual gift of self, conferred in their promises of fidelity and love *to the end*, becomes a participation in the *love to the end* by which Christ gave himself to the Church as to a Spouse (see Jn 13:1).” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: The Trinity and Marriage**

“To be created in the image and likeness of God means, therefore, that human beings reflect not the life of a solitary deity, but the communal life of the Trinity. Human beings were created not to live solitary lives, but to live in communion with God and with one another, a communion that is both life-giving and loving.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Faith, Hope and Love**

“As the Church is a community of faith, hope, and love, so the Christian family, as the domestic church, is called to be a community of faith, hope, and love. Through this faith, hope, and love, Jesus, by the power of his Holy Spirit, abides within each Christian

family, as he does within the whole Church, and pours out the love of his Father within it.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: The Call to Parents**

“While all members of the family are called to live out the foundational Christian virtues, fathers and mothers have a special responsibility for fostering these virtues within their children. They are the first to proclaim the faith to their children. They are responsible for nurturing the vocation of each child, showing by example how to live the married life, and taking special care if a child might be called to priesthood or consecrated life.”

To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Parents-first evangelizers**

“Not only do parents present their children for Baptism, but, having done so, they become the first evangelizers and teachers of the faith. They evangelize by teaching their children to pray and by praying with them. They bring their children to Mass and teach them biblical stories. They show them how to obey God’s commandments and to live a Christian life of holiness.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Marriage and the Community**

“The marital vocation is not a private or merely personal affair. Yes, marriage is a deeply personal union and relationship, but it is also for the good of the Church and the entire community.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Marriage in the Church**

“As a vocation, or call from God, marriage has a public and ecclesial status within the Church. Catholic spouses ordinarily exchange marital consent within a church setting, before a priest or deacon. The living-out of marriage takes place within the whole Body of Christ, which it serves and in which it finds nourishment.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: The Vocation**

“Become what you are! This might be a great exhortation to newly married couples, especially given the strong tendency nowadays to reduce the love of the marriage bond to only a feeling, perhaps the romantic love of courtship and honeymoon. When that feeling dries up, it may seem to them that they have nothing left and that they have failed.

It is at these very times, however, that their vocation as spouses calls them to go further, to ‘become what they are,’ members of a marital communion defined by the unbreakable spousal love of Christ for his Church.” To read the document go to

<http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Growing Together in Virtues**

“There is another way to look at growth in marriage: namely, as growth in virtue. As a couple grows in virtue, they grow in holiness. In other words, the couple acquires, by prayer and discipline, those interior qualities that open them to God’s love and allow them to share in his love more deeply. Couples instinctively understand this when they speak about their marriage being a means of leading each other to heaven.” To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: God always present**

“They [married couples] are to foster this gospel faith among themselves and within their children through their teaching and example. Likewise, they live in hope of God’s kindness, mercy, and generosity. In the midst of the inevitable trials and hardships, they

trust that God is graciously watching over them and their family. They trust that the Father's love will never abandon them, but that, in union with Jesus, they will always remain in his presence." To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Living Chastely**

"Married people are called to love with conjugal chastity. That is, their love is to be total, faithful, exclusive, and open to life...The practice of marital chastity ensures that both husband and wife will strive to live as a gift of self, one to the other, generously. In other words, marital chastity protects a great good: the communion of persons and the procreative purposes of marriage." To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Pornography**

"Pornography, particularly internet pornography, is a serious threat to marital chastity and is gravely immoral. The Internet has made pornography readily accessible within the privacy of one's home. Using pornography can quickly become an addiction that erodes trust and intimacy between husband and wife and, in some cases, leads to the breakup of the common life of the spouses." To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Gratitude**

"As a husband and wife are thankful for one another and express this gratitude in the giving of themselves completely to one another, so this gratitude is open to the further gifts that this self-giving literally embodies: that is, a gratitude for the possible further gift of children. Inherent within a husband's gratitude for his wife is that together with her he can beget children. Inherent within a wife's gratitude for her husband is that together with him she can conceive children. Together a husband and wife are gratefully open to the gift of children." To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Journey in faith**

"Getting married does not, therefore, magically confer perfection. Rather, the love to which the spouses have been configured is powerful enough to transform their whole life's journey so that it becomes a journey toward perfection. In this journey, the spouses are ever more conformed into the likeness of Christ so that they can ever more perfectly love one another as Christ loves his Church." To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Marriage and Eucharist**

"In the Eucharist, spouses encounter the love that animates and sustains their marriage, the love of Christ for his Church. This encounter enables them to perceive that their marriage and family are not isolated units, but rather that they are to reach out in love to the broader Church and world of which they are a living part." To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

**Marriage: Love and Life In The Divine Plan: Marriage and the Kingdom of God**

"A marriage that is truly in Christ, a marriage upon which his school of gratitude and openness has left its mark of joy and warmth, is a sign of the Kingdom that is coming. It is a blessing to the couple, to their children, and to everyone who knows them. It offers a sign of hope and a loving witness to human dignity in a world where hope often seems absent and human dignity is often degraded. It is a sign of the Kingdom because the love of Christ moves the married couple to ever greater heights of love." To read the document go to <http://www.usccb.org/loveandlife/>.

