



Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3040 • FAX 202-541-3176

January 16, 2015

Dear Brother Bishops,

Greeting and blessings in this new year. The upcoming observances of National Marriage Week (Feb. 7-14), World Marriage Day (Sunday, Feb. 8) and Valentine's Day (Feb. 14) provide an opportunity to celebrate the gift and blessing of marriage and to affirm and support engaged and married couples.

As you know, one of the pastoral priorities of our Conference is to promote and strengthen marriage both as a natural institution willed by the Lord and as a Christian sacrament between a baptized man and baptized woman. Marriage and the family face many challenges in our contemporary society. The declining numbers of marriages in the Church is a concern to our Committee, as are the effects that pornography use has on marriages and families. In the political and legal realm, it is certainly of grave concern to see continuing attempts to redefine marriage into something other than the lifelong union of one man and one woman.

And yet we remember that in the midst of ongoing challenges, there are always opportunities to proclaim the Gospel more clearly. In particular, we eagerly anticipate the upcoming World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia from September 22-27, 2015. A preparatory catechesis for this event is available at www.worldmeeting2015.org. We also look forward to the Ordinary Synod on the vocation and mission of the family in the Church and in the contemporary world, to be held in Rome October 2015. We are especially thankful for the many good efforts that continue in dioceses and parishes to promote, strengthen and defend marriage, and to accompany marriages and families in their joys and difficulties.

On behalf of the Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth, I am grateful to highlight various resources that may be of assistance as your dioceses and parishes continue to build a culture that honors and promotes marriage and the family.

Preaching Resource – We are pleased to offer a preaching resource based on the readings for World Marriage Day, Sunday, Feb. 8 (enclosed with this letter). We hope this will encourage and assist your priests and deacons in preaching about marriage and the family, with a suggested emphasis this year on marriage as a vocation and with recognition of this Year for Consecrated Life.

Bulletin Insert – We are also making available a new bulletin insert that can be used during National Marriage Week or at any time (enclosed with this letter). This insert utilizes social science data to highlight marriage as a great good in itself and as a gift to the married couple, their children, and society.

Call to Prayer for Life, Marriage, and Religious Liberty – During National Marriage Week, as part of the ongoing initiative to build a culture of life and marriage and to protect religious liberty, dioceses and parishes might consider promoting Friday February 13 as a day of

prayer and sacrifice for the particular intention of a greater reverence for the gift of marriage and family in our nation and for all husbands and wives, that they will strive to be faithful in good times and in bad. More information on the Call to Prayer is available at www.usccb.org/pray.

For Your Marriage and Por Tu Matrimonio – A large and varied collection of resources for couples who are married or preparing for marriage can be found in English and Spanish at www.ForYourMarriage.org and www.PorTuMatrimonio.org. Both sites also run Facebook pages, which will provide daily content during National Marriage Week: www.facebook.com/foryourmarriage and www.facebook.com/PorTuMatrimonio.

Marriage: Unique for a Reason – Video and print materials and other educational and catechetical resources that present the beauty and explain the uniqueness of marriage as the permanent, faithful, and fruitful union of one man and one woman can be found at www.MarriageUniqueforaReason.org.

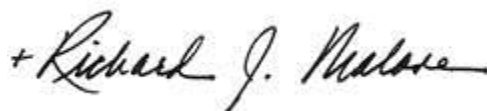
World Marriage Day – Resources for celebrating World Marriage Day (Sunday, Feb. 8), sponsored by Worldwide Marriage Encounter, are available at <http://wmd.wwme.org>. World Marriage Day, now in its 33rd consecutive year, received the Apostolic Blessing of Pope St. John Paul II in 1993.

National Marriage Week USA – Lastly, National Marriage Week, now in its sixth year, is a collaborative effort to influence the culture by faith communities, business, media, education, and non-profit groups. It promotes marriage as a benefit to husbands and wives and to the nation, as well as the best environment in which to raise children. Information and resources are at <http://www.nationalmarriageweekusa.org>. Dioceses might consider adding marriage programs, including conferences and retreats, to the national calendar facilitated by National Marriage Week USA.

Thank you again for this opportunity to highlight these resources in anticipation of the celebrations for marriage next month. I would be grateful if you could share this information with the clergy and lay leaders of your diocese. May these upcoming observances be occasions to affirm ever more deeply the gift of marriage and family life and may the Lord continue to bless all that you do in witness to the beauty and gift of marriage and the family.

With gratitude and prayerful best wishes, I am

Fraternally in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard J. Malone". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Richard J. Malone
Bishop of Buffalo
Chairman

Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth

Encl.