



MARRIAGE

Unique for a Reason

Video Reflections

from the MUR blog site

Collected reflections for *Made for Each Other, Made for Life, Made for Freedom, and Made for the Common Good*

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MADE FOR EACH OTHER

Segment Reflections

This resource accompanies short segments of the video *Made for Each Other*. The clips are available *on the blog* but you may also use this document to guide reflection and discussion of the video as a whole. In *Made for Each Other*, actors playing Josh and Carrie discuss the importance of sexual difference to marriage and the complementarity between man and woman. This resource, which is simply a compilation of MUR blog posts, explores these themes a bit more. Much of the content will contain text found in the full-length *Viewer's Guide of Made for Each Other*. The questions provided can be used for personal reflection or for group discussion.

Introduction

But God did not create man a solitary being. From the beginning “male and female he created them” (Gn 1:27). This partnership of man and woman constitutes the first form of communion between persons.

—Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), no. 12¹

What is marriage?

The question of what marriage is has been largely ignored in debates about who can *get* married. Before asking who can get married, one should ask what “marriage” is. What is this relationship that two (or more) people want the state to recognize, and why should society care about it?

Let's see what definitions are out there and how they measure up to what we all kinda-sorta-in-our-bones know about what marriage is.

Google: *the legally or formally recognized union of a man and a woman (or, in some jurisdictions, two people of the same sex) as partners in a relationship.*

“Union. . . as partners in a relationship.” Well, what kind of relationship? What about business partnerships or siblings? What kind of union?

Merriam-Webster: *a (1): the state of being united to a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife*

in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law (2): the state of being united to a person of the same sex in a relationship like that of a traditional marriage <same-sex marriage>

This one is interesting because, as you see, the authors have to resort to comparing “the state of being united to a person of the same sex” as being *like* “traditional marriage” in order to explain it. It's definitely better than Google's definition, since it gets to the parties “being united. . . in a consensual and contractual relationship” but once again, we could say that the same would apply to different kinds of “consensual and contractual relationships”.

Oxford Dictionary: *The legally or formally recognized union of two people as partners in a personal relationship (historically and in some jurisdictions specifically a union between a man and a woman).*

This is probably the most accurate definition of the way the majority of people understand marriage today: “union of two people as partners in a personal relationship.” It is worth asking, then, why the government has any interest in personal relationships.

It seems like all these definitions lack something.

If you really take the time to think about the definition of marriage, you will discover that there is only one definition of marriage that truly fits with who we are as human beings (body and soul, male and female) and seems to get at what is fundamental: marriage is the lifelong, exclusive union of one man and one woman, open to life.²

This definition expresses what marriage is when it is lived truly, and this is a grace available to every married couple. But in this world of brokenness, we have all witnessed a general weakening of people’s understanding and living out this truth. The cultural and legal connections among marriage, sexual intercourse, childbearing, and

childrearing have been slowly chipped away at, whether through acceptance of extra-marital sex and cohabitation on the one hand, or third-party reproduction on the other. One can easily see that our society as a whole has lost a consciousness of what men and women are called to be for one another.

God’s vision and plan for marriage is *an ideal* but it is not *idealistic*. As Pope Francis taught in *Amoris Laetitia*, “in no way must the Church desist from proposing the full ideal of marriage, God’s plan in all its grandeur.”³ And again, he writes, “Married couples are grateful that their pastors uphold the high ideal of a love that is strong, solid, enduring and capable of sustaining them through whatever trials they may have to face.”⁴ Marriage is a communion of persons, a communion of love between husband and wife, meant to be the source of the family and society. That’s why, when the Pharisees questioned Jesus about divorce, He referred back to creation, when Adam and Eve were given in relationship to one another for life (see Mt 19:4-6; Mk 10:6-8).⁵

1. Made “For Each Other”

In this segment of the video, Josh and Carrie discuss the way that marriage is not like being roommates who live together, but separately. Man and woman are *made for each other* in a way that is absolutely unique. We see this through their sexual difference, even if we just look to the human body as male or female. A man’s body does not make sense by itself, nor does a woman’s; only together is it possible to get the whole picture of humanity. At a deeper level, as Josh says in the video, there is also a longing of the one for the other. There are always and only two ways of being human¹:

we cannot *be* the other, so we want to *be with* the other.

We are made for union and communion, to be in relation with others.⁶ In Genesis, God says, “It is not good for the man to be alone” (Gn 2:18). God’s solution to man’s isolation is not to create another identical man. Rather, He creates a woman from the man’s side and gives the two to each other in the first marriage. “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 19:5; cf. Gn 2:24).

1 Even in those rare cases of atypical genetic or physical development, the fundamental question is whether the person is male or female. There are only “X” and “Y” chromosomes, there is no “other” sex. In such cases, we rely on natural science that can help determine biological sex. This knowledge will help the person to understand his or her sexual identity.

The two become one flesh in the physical act of sexual intercourse, in which the bodies of the man and woman cooperate in an act which may bring about the procreation of another human being. As Eve says, “I have produced a male child with the help of the LORD” (Gn 4:1). There is only one “combination” of human bodies that can produce new life: a man and a woman. If you accept the idea that human life has special value, then you

should also accept that the (one and only) natural action that can bring this life into existence is, by that fact, unique in its power and importance to the world.

The truth of the human person, created male and female, and the truth of what marriage is, are not only concerns of religion or religious people—they are truths that affect everyone.

Discussion question:

1. Why is it important to society that marriage be based on sexual difference?
2. Why is the fact of our being created male and female not simply a tool for the survival of the species?

2. Sexual Difference Does Not Compete, It Complements

In our second clip from *Made for Each Other*, Carrie starts us off with the comment, “Our sexual difference doesn’t compete; it complements.” Sexual unity and the coming-to-be of babies depend on the difference between man and woman. The husband gives his whole self (body, mind, heart, soul) to his wife; the wife gives her whole self to her husband. This happens in a particularly clear and dramatic way when the gift of the body is offered in marital intercourse. The spouses give themselves and receive each other *in and through their difference*. As Josh says, “every natural process of the body” can be done by one-self—“everything but making love and having children,” which depends upon the other person being *different*. Sexual difference is the avenue towards real union, a union that is also open to life.

Sexual difference concerns the whole person, as Carrie points out. Only through this difference can

a man and a woman give themselves fully and love each other as spouses. This isn’t unjust discrimination; it’s an actual distinction, a matter of reality. Sexual intercourse in marriage is a way of communicating, it is a language spoken face-to-face. Part of the essential grammar of this language is sexual difference. Without it, marriage can’t be spoken of.⁷

Men and women are equal *and* different. Difference is a great and necessary good. “It’s constructive,” as Josh says. Sexual difference is what enables a man and a woman to form a unique bond for life, a union that is deeper than friendship and lasts until death. A husband gives to his wife what only a husband can give. Likewise, a wife gives to her husband what only a wife can give. And together, they give the world new life!

Discussion questions:

1. Do you think sexual difference is understood and appreciated today? Why or why not?
2. How can we help others reflect on the importance of sexual difference and complementarity?

3. What Are These Differences?

In this section of *Made for Each Other*, Josh and Carrie explore what sexual difference may look like in a given couple. Men and women are, as Carrie puts it, “different in ways that will always matter.” Biology is important, but the body and the person are not reducible to biology. Sexual difference involves the whole person, body and soul.

The body reveals the person. We’re not souls trapped in bodies. We’re “body-persons.” We don’t just *have* a body. We *are* our bodies. (We even have words for people who are without one or the other—a corpse is a body that is missing a soul; a ghost is (perhaps) a soul missing a body.) The body of a man and the body of a woman are distinct, *personal* realities. In addition, as Pope St. John Paul II taught, these bodies have a “spousal meaning.”⁸ The body, in its masculinity or femininity, reveals that we are persons who are made to be a gift to others and to be received as a gift by others.

Every human person shares the same nature (human) and the same dignity, made in the image of God. Our sexual identity as a man or a woman is the way in which that humanity is manifested. This identity is meant to be acknowledged and accepted as a gift from God.⁹ It has significance for all the various ways we relate to others: we are a daughter *or* a son, a sister *or* a brother, a mother *or* a father.

While some play down the reality of sexual difference or limit it to the differences between female

and male anatomy, sciences such as neurobiology, evolutionary psychology, endocrinology, histology, and reproductive physiology—to name a few—point to the intricate, unique, and complementary physiologies of women and men. We may have conversations differently; take risks differently; form and process relationships differently; respond to threats differently. These differences do not imply that one sex is superior to the other. Men and women are just different. Admitting this does not diminish either sex but serves to enhance the possibility of their unity in love.

Of course, men and women differ among themselves, as well as differing from each other. Sex differences in each and every trait need not be present in each and every individual woman or man. But the *way* a trait is lived out will always be distinct, whichever person, man or woman, is exhibiting it. For example, the way that St. Joan of Arc was a soldier was not the same as a man’s way.

Our gender, which can be distinguished but not separated from our sex,² is a fundamental “given” in our lives. Male and female are two different ways of being human, body and soul.

2 See *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 56.

Discussion questions:

1. What does it mean to say that “the body reveals the person”?
2. How do equality and difference go together when speaking of man and woman? How does complementarity depend upon difference?

4. What Is Marriage All About?

The final section from *Made for Each Other* has to do with what is traditionally called the two “ends” (or purposes, reasons for existing) of marriage. The Church teaches that because marriage is the total gift of one spouse’s life to the other, it entails both the gift of love and the gift of children. Marriage is the gift *for* life and the gift *of* life. It’s unique and irreplaceable—the fundamental institution for life.

The Church affirms that the love of husband and wife is a great good in and of itself, even if they do not receive the gift of a child. Human marriage is a foreshadowing of the marriage between Christ and his Church and sacramental marriage participates in and shows forth this love (see Eph 5:28-33).

Marriage lived in truth is an indispensable model of communion for the world and an affirmation

that life is good. The love of husband and wife reminds us all that no one is an isolated individual, that we need one another at the most fundamental level. This love is meant to be the context for welcoming, forming, and educating new life. This is why marriage, as a personal relationship, has always been recognized to have great, public significance. The love of spouses, the responsibilities of mothers and fathers, and the rights of children—all are tied to the unique truth of marriage and its protection and promotion.

The Church will never waver in her teaching that marriage is the lifelong union of a woman and a man, open to life. From the beginning, man and woman are made for each other. There is nothing else like it.

Discussion questions:

1. How is marriage the “gift for life” and the “gift of life”?
2. The public proposal to “redefine” marriage to include persons of the same sex is fairly recent. How is it connected to a larger confusion around the meaning of the person and sex?
3. How is this meaning inseparable from the truth of marriage as the union of one man and one woman?

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 19:5)

Notes

- 1 See Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: Volume 1: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, new rev. ed. (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing, 1996).
- 2 See CCC, nos. 1601-1605.
- 3 *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 307.
- 4 *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 200.
- 5 See Pope John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (TOB), trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 1–4 (audience numbers); Pope John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1993), nos. 22 and 53.
- 6 See CCC, nos. 45, 371-372, 1603-1604, and 1877-1879.
- 7 This is also why sex outside of marriage doesn't make any sense. Sex itself speaks a language of total commitment and gift—faithful and indissoluble love. That's the language of marriage. Sex outside of marriage always says something that is untrue. It's pretending. Real love depends on truth, and truth depends on love (see Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* [Washington, DC: USCCB, 2009], nos. 1-9).
- 8 See TOB, 13:1–16:2. See also Pope John Paul II's *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 37, and *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 15.
- 9 See CCC, nos. 2332-2333.

MADE FOR LIFE

Segment Reflections

This resource accompanies short segments of the video *Made for Life*. The clips are available *on the blog* but you may also use this document to guide reflection and discussion of the video as a whole. In *Made for Life*, married couples discuss the importance of openness to life to their marriages, and why children do best in homes with married mothers and fathers. This resource, which is simply a compilation of MUR blog posts, explores these themes a bit more. Much of the posts will contain text found in the full-length *Viewer's Guide* of *Made for Life*. The questions provided can be used for personal reflection or for group discussion.

Introduction

By their very nature, the institution of matrimony itself and conjugal love are ordained for the procreation and education of children, and find in them their ultimate crown.

—Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), no. 48¹

How are marriage and life connected?

Everyone knows “where babies come from” and that marriage, commitment, or really any knowledge of the other person is not strictly necessary. So why is “Life” (or “Children”) one of the four themes for the *Marriage: Unique for a Reason* initiative? To answer this question, it’s necessary to answer a couple of other questions first:

1. What are human beings?
2. What do human beings require to flourish?

What are we? There are many helpful definitions of the human being out there that get at our unique constitution: rational animals, ensouled bodies or embodied souls, individuals-in-relation, or, to be a bit more technical about it: “A man, woman, or child of the species *Homo sapiens*, distinguished from other animals by superior mental development, power of articulate speech, and upright stance.”² We are at the “top of the

food chain” even though we are by no means the strongest of animals, and we are the only animals able to consider our own being and destiny. And yet, despite these inherent capacities, we are, at the same time, the most helpless of all animals when we are infants. We take the longest time to become “self-sufficient” and require other creatures to care for us and educate us for years. We cannot survive without our parents or some other adult human being who is willing to step into the place of a parent. And since our senses develop *in utero*, we know the smell of our mother³ and the sound of her voice⁴ and can recognize her when we are born. Our mother’s physical presence can calm us down as infants. There is also evidence that the presence of an involved father during pregnancy reduces the risk of death for the infant for the first year⁵ and his physical or mental status can affect his baby’s health.⁶

In view of these facts, what do human beings need in order to flourish? We need a mother and a father—and not only when we are infants, but all the way through adulthood!⁷ If this is how we have been created, it makes sense that in God’s plan, a new human being would come-to-be within a relationship that would (at least attempt to) guarantee that this human being would be cared for by his or her mother and father for all of life. Marriage—the permanent, faithful, fruitful union of one man and one woman—is God’s first and primary way

of taking care of each and every one of us from the beginning of our existence. We come-to-be in an act of sexual intercourse between a man and a woman; if that man and woman are married, we end up in the situation best suited to our human development.⁸ “Marriage as fundamentally pro-child, protecting the gift of the child and preserving the vital roles of mothers and fathers.”⁹ So that’s why “Children” is one of our considerations when we talk about the uniqueness of marriage.

1. Children are a Gift

Marriage is “made for life” because marriage is the safest and most proper place for God to create other human beings. Why? Because it ensures, as much as possible, that the child will receive the care he or she needs and deserves from both “halves” of his or her origin. The sexual act in marriage is imbued with meaning and consequence, and marriage is the only human relationship that can be considered *worthy* of bringing new life into the world. Married couples vow themselves into a union that is outward-directed, open to life. You could not really love someone and at the same time say, “But I would never want to have a child with you.” As the bishops of the United States taught in their pastoral letter on marriage, “It is the nature of love to overflow, to be life-giving.”¹⁰

Pope St. John Paul II taught, “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.”¹¹ When a man and woman marry, they are at the same time promising that the only way that they are going to give life to “a third” is with one another.¹² If either the man or woman experiences infertility, whether permanent or temporary, this is not a cross carried by him or her alone, but rather is a joint cross carried by the couple together. This is part of what the Church means when she teaches that the unitive and procreative meanings of married love are inseparable.

In embracing each other, husband and wife embrace their capacity to conceive a child. This does not mean that a child will be—or should be—conceived from every act of sexual intimacy. It simply means that they are not closed to this natural gift.

As our interviewees say at the end of this clip: each child is a gift of God!

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it difficult for people to understand that married love involves openness to life?
2. What does it mean to say that “being open to children” at the same time “opens yourself up to your spouse”?
3. How are openness to life and sexual difference related?

2. Mothers and Fathers Matter

In many ways this is one of those truisms that we know through experience: mothers and fathers matter. It is common sense, and it is part of all of our pasts; whether our mother or father were present or absent defines, in many ways, our childhoods. But there are some today who claim that it really doesn't matter if you have a father or a mother as long as you have people who love you. The redefinition of civil marriage to include persons of the same sex essentially redefines parenthood as well.¹³

Marriage is a pro-child institution. It is not just about the satisfaction of adult desires. Marriage is not something private—it's a public institution with public roles and responsibilities. The love between husband and wife naturally opens up to include the child, the family, and the greater society. This openness is simply not possible for persons of the same sex, who cannot form a spousal

union that is open to the gift of life. They cannot “have a child” together; it's simply and objectively impossible. Society has, therefore, a legitimate interest in and a just obligation toward protecting and promoting the natural family based on marriage between a man and a woman.

The family is the place where the youngest and most vulnerable members of our society are born and raised. As the “sanctuary of life,”¹⁴ the family deserves to be valued and aided by society. This is why the Supreme Court's decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* is unjust. In addition to telling a lie about *what marriage is*, it undermines the social good of natural marriage and the rights of children. Society's well-being and very existence are bound up with marriage and the family; we must work to overturn this decision, just as we hope one day to overturn the unjust decision in *Roe v. Wade*.

Discussion Questions:

1. Does our society treat the family founded on marriage as fundamental?
2. What are the reasons that society has, for centuries, privileged the natural family based on marriage between a man and a woman?

3. Single Parents

In this section of *Made for Life*, a single mother, Elizabeth, talks about her experience of raising her

daughter alone; later in the video Elizabeth talks about what hopes she has for her daughter's future.

Emphasizing the deep need every child has to be raised by a father and a mother does not mean that the Church looks down on single parents. On the contrary, the Church seeks to support single parents who are raising children without the support of a spouse because she recognizes how hard this situation can be. Often a single mother has made a heroic decision in giving her child life and a home despite knowing that the child's father will not participate. Single parents work hard to provide a stable, loving home for their children in an un-ideal situation. As Elizabeth points out, most single parents did not expect to be "doing this" (raising a child) on their own. Something unexpected happened.

The situation of children being raised by a single parent (due to unforeseen circumstances) is very different from *deliberately* depriving a child of a

mother or a father, which occurs (*de facto*) when children are raised by two men or two women. While single parents have the freedom to recognize the absence of a father—or a mother—in the lives of their children and talk with their children about this, the absence of either is likely going to be ignored in a same-sex household.¹⁵ Most single parents, like Elizabeth, hope that their child will not have to go through what they did in raising them alone. As she says later in the video, Elizabeth hopes that her daughter marries "a wonderful Christian man who can guide her future family and be a wonderful father."

We can and must support single parents without sacrificing the teaching that children deserve to know and be raised and loved by both their mother and their father.

Discussion Questions:

1. How would you explain to someone the difference between a single parent and two men or two women who are raising a child?
2. How can the Church and society best support single parents, while holding up the natural family as the ideal?

4. Children Deserve Both a Mother and a Father

As we saw earlier, single parents can still honor the importance of sexual difference by acknowledging the unique difficulties their families face, but two persons of the same sex who raise a child are unable to do so.

Two men or two women who claim to replace a mother and a father reject the vital role that parental sexual difference plays in the development of a child, especially the child's sexual identity. Children look to their parents to figure out what it means to be a boy or a girl and how to relate to the opposite sex. When there is not a model in the

home of one sex or the other, one of these developmental tasks the child faces necessarily and *by definition* is made incredibly difficult. How can John understand what it means to be a man when he primarily only sees two women interacting? How can Anna understand her worth as a woman if her two caregivers are both men? As adults, it can be hard to remember what it is to be a child, completely dependent on our parents and constantly absorbing things (largely unconsciously) that shape our understanding of the world. These things aren't quantifiable or really even "provable". We know by faith, in a way, that *based on the*

Catholic understanding of who the human being is, being raised by two men or two women wounds a child. Of course, these wounds are not incurable; the Divine Physician is always ready to heal and transform the hurts that we sustain as children. But that does not mean that we do not do all that we can as a Church and society to prevent predictable suffering.

Too much of the discussion around marriage redefinition revolved around the supposed “rights” of adults to sexual and social “fulfillment” in a recognized legal partnership rather than the rights of children to know and be raised by their parents. (Or, ironically, one of the Justices argued

that “children of same-sex couples” had the right for their “parents” to be recognized by the State, ignoring the fact that, by nature and rights, there are no “children of same-sex couples” except those procured by an unjust system.)

One of the reasons that it is hard to explain and defend the Church’s position on marriage is that, as a society, we have conceptually separated two things that should be together: marriage and having children. We must help our contemporaries to see that these two things belong together, so that we can minimize the damage that will be done to young lives by the choices of adults.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does it mean that single parents can still “honor” the importance of sexual difference in the lives of their children?
2. Consider your experience as a child. What do you think you learned by watching your mother and father interact?
3. Given that a child being raised in a same-sex household suffers a wound, how can the Church better support those children?

5. Mothers and Fathers are Different

Katie and Pete talk about how they play differently with their kids, and Pete speaks about society’s obligation to support that which is best for children.

That mothers and fathers are different is a common sense and intuitive statement. It does not mean that “All moms do X” or “All dads do Y” but rather that mothers and fathers, even when they *do the exact same thing*, do not do it *the same way*. Men and women just do things differently.

Why is this important and beneficial for children? Sociologically, we don’t know, we only know that it appears to be the case. Philosophically, we can

understand it because we know ourselves to be one sex or the other, and therefore seeing both ways of being human every day informs our self-understanding as well as an understanding that there is always another way of being. And theologically, we can see that if sexually-differentiated humanity is really “the image of God,” then our image of God, our idea of who God is and how God loves us, will be incomplete without seeing the love of a man and a woman lived out before us.

And if we know that it’s important for kids to have a mother and a father, and that even if we don’t know why, children consistently do better in that environment, shouldn’t we promote and defend it?

Discussion Questions:

1. What are practical ways that you can promote and defend marriage today?
2. What are examples from your own family of how masculinity and femininity is displayed and honored in a day-to-day way?

6. Sexual Difference Matters

The last clip from *Made for Life* is one of Katie and Pete talking about the way that marriage provides the “perfect” setting to raise a child. It takes a man and a woman to bring a new human being into the world. Two men or two women simply cannot do this. So if sexual difference is the basic necessity for conceiving a child, then it makes sense that sexual difference would also be important for raising that child. A mother and a father bring balance and ensure that children always have one person similar to and one person different from them to look up to.

A child’s “first right” is to “be born in a real family,” that is, to be born to his or her own father and mother, bonded in marriage.¹⁶ Protecting this right is a matter of social justice. As the bishops have taught, “To promote and protect marriage as the union of one man and one woman is itself a matter of justice. In fact, it would be a grave injustice if the state ignored the unique and proper place of husbands and wives, the place of mothers and

fathers, and especially the rights of children, who deserve from society clear guidance as they grow to sexual maturity.”¹⁷

It is sometimes claimed that what really matters for a child is the presence of any two loving, committed adults, regardless of their sex/gender. But there are major problems with this assertion. First, two men or two women are physically incapable of having a child together. Nothing they do can change this fact. Instead, two people of the same sex must either attempt to adopt a child or contract with a “third party” egg or sperm donor who contributes one-half of the child’s genetic material. This means that placing a child in the care of two men or two women deliberately separates that child from his or her father or mother *in every single case*. Then, those children are further denied the benefit of witnessing a healthy relationship between a father and mother and the experience of the parental love of either a man or a woman. Children deserve better.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think the Church teaches that a child has a right to be born into a family?
2. How does having a mother and father give the child the balance he or she needs?
3. What other topics would you like to explore with *Marriage Unique for a Reason*? Leave a comment and let us know!

Notes

- 1 Second Vatican Council. *Gaudium et Spes*. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html
- 2 Oxford Living Dictionaries. “Human being”. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/human_being
- 3 There are a number of places to read about this, including: <https://www.womenshealth.gov/itsonlynatural/addressing-myths/incredible-facts-about-babies-breast-milk.html> and <http://www.parenting.com/article/your-babys-sense-of-smell>
- 4 Similarly, there are any number of articles on this, including: <http://www.parenting.com/article/what-babies-learn-in-the-womb>
- 5 “Father Involvement in Preganancy Could Reduce Infant Mortality,” EurekAlert, June 17, 2010, www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2010-06/uosf-fii061710.php, as referenced in Paul Raeburn, *Do Fathers Matter?* (New York: Scientific American, 2014).
- 6 Prakesh S. Shah and Knowledge Synthesis Group, “Parental Factors and Low Birthweight, Preterm, and Small for Gestational Age Births: A Systematic Review,” *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* 202, no. 2 (2010): 103-23, as referenced in Paul Raeburn, *Do Fathers Matter?* (New York: Scientific American, 2014).
- 7 So-called “grey divorce” has dramatically risen in the last decade, and adult children struggle when their parents split up. See one of these articles: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/24/fashion/weddings/never-too-old-to-hurt-from-parents-divorce.html?_r=0; http://www.huffingtonpost.com/terry-gaspard-msw-licsw/how-to-move-on-from-your-grey-divorce_b_5242932.html; <https://www.hg.org/article.asp?id=32532>
- 8 See, for example, W. Bradford Wilcox, “*Even for Rich Kids, Marriage Matters*,” *Family Studies*, December 19, 2013; “*Why Marriage Matters: Thirty Conclusions from the Social Sciences*,” Institute for American Values, 2011. Robin Wilson and W. Bradford Wilcox, “*Bringing up Baby: Adoption, Marriage, and the Best Interests of the Child*,” *William and Mary Bill of Rights Journal*. Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 883-908, February 2006. David Ribar, “*Why Marriage Matters for Child Wellbeing*,” *The Future of Children*. Vol. 25, No. 2, Fall 2015. Paula Fomby and Andrew Cherlin, “*Family Instability and Child Well-Being*,” *American Sociological Review*. Vol. 72 (2007): 181–204, doi: 10.1177/000312240707200203. Wendy Manning, Pamela Smock, and Debarun Majumdar, “*The Relative Stability of Cohabiting and Marital Unions for Children*,” *Population Research and Policy Review*. Vol. 23 (2004): 135–59, doi:10.1023/B:POPU.0000019916.29156.a7. Kathleen Ziol-Guest and Rachel Dunifon, “*Complex Living Arrangements and Child Health: Examining Family Structure Linkages with Children’s Health Outcomes*,” *Family Relations*. Vol. 63 (2014): 424–37, doi:10.1111/fare.12071.
- 9 USCCB, *Made For Life Viewer’s Guide*, p. vii.
- 10 USCCB, *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2009), 13.
- 11 *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 14.
- 12 This is one of the ways to understand why the Church holds that *in vitro* fertilization or surrogacy and the like are immoral; they are ways of creating life that circumvent this promise. Those who resort to these kinds of medical interventions refuse to accept the cross in this situation and often make use of another person’s reproductive capacity (via sperm or egg “donation”).
- 13 This was mentioned in the MUR video *Made for Freedom* (around 3:44 in the video), with Alana Newman who is a child and advocate for children of third-party reproduction. Alana points out that the redefinition of marriage opens the door for a major increase in third-party reproduction, since two men or two women who “marry” will necessarily need to utilize the reproductive capacities of another person to “have a child.”
- 14 Pope John Paul II, *On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum (Centesimus Annus)* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1991), no. 39.
- 15 To read about the experience someone who was raised in a household with two “mothers”, check out Katy Faust’s blog: “*Ask the Bigot*”.
- 16 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 244.
- 17 *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, 22. The needs and rights of the child should be of fundamental concern for every society and community, as is acknowledged in “the principle, recognized also in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, that the best interests of the child, as the weaker and more vulnerable party, are to be the paramount consideration in every case.” CDF, *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons* (2003), no. 7, www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20030731_homosexual-unions_en.html.

MADE FOR FREEDOM

Segment Reflections

This resource accompanies short segments of the video *Made for Freedom*. The clips are available *on the blog* but you may also use this document to guide reflection and discussion of the video as a whole. In *Made for Freedom*, experts and witnesses discuss the interplay between belief in authentic marriage and the right of religious freedom, and explore why each is important and integral to the other. This resource, a compilation of MUR blog posts, explores these themes a bit more. This is a simple supplement to the full-length *Study Guide of Made for Freedom*. The questions provided can be used for personal reflection or for group discussion.

1. Faith is not Private

Fr. Nolan says, “Just because our faith is personal doesn’t mean it’s private.” What is the distinction between “personal” and “private”? Americans tend either to overemphasize or underemphasize privacy—we will post our various whims and even our meals on social media, not seeming to care that this is public, but then we may get shy about sharing our views about controversial issues in a public forum.

Faith is deeply personal. It is a gift of grace that directs a person’s whole life. How, then, could it not be visible or clear in public?

The reason the Catholic faith, in particular, cannot be relegated to the “private” sphere, where it’s no one else’s business, is twofold. First, we have been enjoined by Christ to “Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19-20). Secondly, we know that, “faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (Jas 2:17). We cannot sit comfortably in our church pews, recite the creed, and then go “incognito” into the world. Doing so would mean ceasing to be who we are called to be.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do your neighbors and co-workers know that you value your faith? If not, is there a way that you can find to make that clear?
2. Why might it be especially important to show that your faith is important to you today, when faith is less respected in the public square?

2. Three Truths about Marriage

In the next clip, Ryan Anderson addresses three truths that should serve to undergird society’s

upholding of the unique relationship of marriage. They are:

1. Anthropological (men and women are distinct and complementary)
2. Biological (procreation requires both a man and a woman)
3. Social (that children deserve both a mother and a father)

Ryan notes that these truths have been cross-culturally acknowledged. People from many different times and places recognized that the relationship between a man and a woman, the only one that naturally leads to the birth and upbringing of children, is unique and worthy of protection. The natural family is not something that society made up; rather, laws and culture recognized it as a fundamentally human reality. We are each born to a mother and a father, and we deserve to have a relationship with those people who brought us into existence.

While this is a basic truth of humanity, the understanding of it as such has been gradually chipped away through societal changes. Increasing

non-marital childbearing, divorce rates, separation between sex and procreation through either (on the one hand) contraception or abortion or (on the other) in vitro fertilization, scientific experiments on embryonic human life, etc. have all served to dull our sense of the relationship that should exist between men, women, and their children. Despite any thoughts or feelings that two people subjectively may have about their relationship, when they come together in a sexual act, they are participating in that-which-creates-life. And at that point, when life is created from an act that they chose, the man and woman are no longer the only people involved or the only people who get to define their relationship. They have a responsibility to the person they created by virtue of the simple fact that they created them. The child did not choose to come into existence, and he or she becomes the recipient of whatever heritage his or her parents offer. When this heritage is stability and a dedication to the child's growth and education, it is no more than what the child deserves. Marriage provides justice for the child.

Discussion questions:

1. If you have children, how can you remind yourself that they were not owed to you and that you did not "deserve" them or have a "right" to them? If you do not have children, how can you help remind parents that they are gifts?
2. Share a family story about your parents and their ways of being a good mother or father to you.

3. Everyone Has a Mother and a Father

"The fact that connects us all, as human beings, is the fact that everybody comes from a mother and a father."

Alana Newman speaks in the next clip with a forceful rhetorical statement, that if we tweak

this fundamental fact of human existence, we are "robbing [someone] of their humanity." She speaks from personal experience of the pain of a child who is denied the right to know her father. Did you know that children who are born of

third-party reproduction¹ do not have any rights to know who their natural father (or mother) is? Alana speaks about this later in the video, saying that when she learned that the sperm donor was Polish, she flew to Poland so that she could know

something of her heritage in that way. Her experience led Alana to start a project called *Anonymous Us*, a story collective of children from third-party reproduction. She also put a number of these stories into a book that was recently published.

Discussion questions:

1. What has knowledge of your natural parents, and thus their families as well, meant to you? If you have been unable to know one or both of them, how have you been able to overcome this loss?
2. How can you reach out to a single parent that you know?

4. Christian in the Workplace

The next clip features Gloria Purvis. Gloria converted to the Catholic faith at the age of twelve after a profound experience before the Eucharist. In this clip, Gloria notes that the current trend of celebrating diversity notably ignores Christians as valuable members of a diverse society.

It seems that all beliefs are acceptable, and even celebrated, in the workplace unless (or until) these beliefs appear to challenge the current ethos of sexual “freedom.” If diversity is a true value, it requires tolerance, which is a virtue that applies especially when you disagree with the other.

Discussion questions:

1. Are you tolerant of others’ opinions on things, even when you think that they are wrong on an important issue?
2. How can you increase your self-control in discussions that tend to get heated?

5. Are Lawsuits Always Necessary

America is somewhat infamous for her people’s litigious attitudes: we will, it seems, sue anyone over anything. Think about all the common-sense warnings on items that you buy: somewhere,

someone pointed out that without that warning, the company could be sued.

Lawsuits are not always, or usually, the best way to solve disagreements. As Jesus taught, it is best

1 Third-party reproduction is the term used to describe when the reproductive faculties or material of a third person (whether this person is known to the person/couple or not) are used in some way to “make” a child for the other person/couple. The most common form of third-party reproduction is artificial insemination, in which a man “donates” his sperm (he is paid for this), which is then used to fertilize a woman’s ovum. Other forms use a “donated” egg or even an embryo of another couple.

if we can work our differences out “on the way to court” (see Mt 5:25). While a lawsuit may sometimes seem to be the only way to address a wrong that has been done, it is not the normal course of action. The next segment from *Made for Freedom* features an attorney for the *Alliance Defending Freedom*, Kellie Fiedorek, who is speaking about her work in defending Christians and others who are being sued for refusing services which would compromise their beliefs. One may reasonably ask whether it is appropriate to sue someone over these incidents.

People might disagree about whether creating a flower arrangement or a wedding cake for a same-sex couple’s ceremony is cooperating in an immoral activity, but surely we can all agree that a person should never be forced by the government to do something that goes against their conscience.

At times of crisis and war, America has upheld the rights of conscientious objectors to serve in ways other than in battle. The government may choose to fight, but they do not force someone to fight if it goes against their conscience. One could make the same case here. The government has redefined marriage in the law. It has decreed that two men or two women can be united in the same way as a man and a woman. This goes against the religious beliefs of many people in our society. Why should they be coerced into going along with it?

Take some time to become more familiar with one of the people affected by a lawsuit over the redefinition of marriage or sexuality:

Jack Phillips
Barronelle Stutzman
Blaine Adamson

Discussion questions:

1. What obligations do you think a Christian has to witness to marriage today?
2. How can the authentic virtue of tolerance help us to think about lawsuits over the redefinition of marriage and its effects?

6. Adoption as Grafting

Peter Range shares a bit of his experience in adoption ministry in today’s sections from *Made for Freedom*.

Peter talks about a child being “grafted into a family with a mother and a father.” When you choose to “graft” something on to something else, you want to make sure that the thing you are grafting onto is healthy and robust. In gardening, *grafting* is done to strengthen the plant, to give it the best chance of surviving. In adoption, a birth mother is placing her child lovingly into the arms of those

she believes and trusts will give her child the best chance at thriving.

As Peter notes, when an agency is looking to place a child into a new “forever” home, they are looking for the best environment for the child; they would not want to place a child into a home that is lacking a fundamental element that the child needs, or that features something that child should not be exposed to. (As a simple example, an adoption agency would not be doing its job well if they placed a child with severe pet allergies into a home

where the parents have 3 dogs and 5 cats!) In this way, Catholic adoption agencies seek to place children in homes with married couples, whenever possible. This is so that the child will grow up with

a mother and a father; a man and woman who will step in to offer the child what their natural mother and father could not.

Discussion questions:

1. Consider the experience of adoption and the testimony of adopted children to their interest, or lack thereof, in meeting their birth parents. How can the Church accompany these children and their parents?
2. What does adoption have to do with the discussion of same-sex "marriage"?

MADE FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Segment Reflections

This resource accompanies short segments of the video *Made for the Common Good*. The clips are available on the blog but you may also use this document to guide reflection and discussion of the video as a whole. In *Made for the Common Good*, experts discuss the importance of marriage to society. This resource, which is simply a compilation of MUR blog posts, explores these themes a bit more. Much of the posts will contain text found in the full-length *Study Guide* (coming soon) of *Made for the Common Good*. The questions provided can be used for personal reflection or for group discussion.

Introduction

“The common good embraces the sum total of all those conditions of social life which enable individuals, families, and organizations to achieve complete an effective fulfillment.”

— St. John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, no. 74

What does “the common good” of society mean?

The *Catechism*’s section on the common good (nos. 1905-1917) lists three essential components:

1. Respect for the person
2. Social well-being and development
3. Peace

It notes, “The common good is always oriented towards the progress of persons: ‘The order of things must be subordinate to the order of persons, and not the other way around’ (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 26). This order is founded on truth, built up in justice, and animated by love” (CCC, no. 1912).

To put it simply, society should be ordered in such a way that people will find it easier to *be good*, even to *get to heaven*—to develop their gifts and capacities in peace, carrying out their duties and

responsibilities without having to struggle against oppression or fear, able to act according to their consciences. The common good is meant to ensure that people may live a “truly human life” (CCC, no. 1908). Government, the state, has a role to play in upholding the common good (see CCC, no. 1910) by supporting institutions that are good for all.

Strong marriages—marriages in which a man and a woman stay together for their entire lives—are good for *society* as well as for the couple themselves. They serve as examples to the community of the virtues of love, fidelity and perseverance. They demonstrate the capacity of the human being to live up to his or her promises. As G.K. Chesterton put it, “It is the nature of love to bind itself, and the institution of marriage merely paid the average man the compliment of taking him at his word.”¹ Children who are raised in homes with

their own married mother and father enjoy stability that no other family structure offers.²

If we consider these points, it becomes clear that marriage is important to the common good of society—the institution of marriage, properly understood as a man and a woman, bound to one

another and their children, helps everyone in the society to flourish. It encourages young men and women to make promises to one another if they want to be “a couple”; it gives a societal recognition of such a promise and the community’s investment in helping the couple to keep it; and it gives children the stable homes they deserve.

1. Marriage, the Foundation

In this segment from the opening of *Made for the Common Good*, Glenn Stanton uses the analogy of the foundation of a house to help us think about marriage’s role in a community.

Did you know that, even if the neighborhood is not safe in general, children in married households are safer, and witness less violence, than children in one-parent homes?³ In addition, “Even after controlling for socioeconomic factors, studies show that children who grow up in single-parent households are poorer, less economically mobile, and more prone to a variety of behavioral issues than those raised by married parents.”⁴ The stability of a home with a mother and father who are committed to their marriage cannot be overestimated.

One of the questions facing our society today is: how can we help young people to see the benefits of marriage, especially when they are inclined to be either afraid or pessimistic about it?⁵ How can we encourage young people to consider marrying, particularly marrying before having children? Despite the fact that married men report happiness at a higher rate than unmarried or cohabiting men,⁶ the number of men who are married between the ages of 20 and 39 has dropped significantly in the last twenty years.⁷ It is clear that so much more needs to be done as a society and in the Church (or as the Church) to reverse this decline.

Discussion questions:

1. Do you think the analogy of a foundation of a house is apt for marriage and society? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think children who grow up in married homes with their mom and dad seem to fare better than others?

2. A Child’s Potential

In the next segment, Peter Range discusses the way a child can reach his or her “full potential” in the care of a loving mother and father. He is speaking

in a particular way from his experience assisting with the Church’s adoption ministry.

While expressing support and admiration for those generous single persons who feel called to open their homes to children who are in need of adoption, the general preference of the Church for adoptive situations is to entrust a child to a married mother and father, who can supply the kind of home that the child has lost.

Is it just that you need two people? Would two mothers or two fathers be just as good?

Consider your own relationship with your parents, or even with aunts and uncles or nieces or nephews. Our relationships are necessarily conditioned by our physical reality. A hug from your

dad is experientially just *a different thing* from a hug from your mom. The way you relate to others has to do with whether you are a man or a woman—that does not mean simply that you can't do x, y, or z but rather that when you do x, y, or z, you do those things *as* a man or *as* a woman. Therefore, the way you learn about relationships as a child is in large part through watching a man and a woman—your parents—interact every day before your eyes. You also learn as a child that your sister and brother aren't treated exactly the same way and that Uncle Joe is the one who throws you in the air while Aunt Sally pinches your cheek. *It's just different.*

Discussion questions:

1. How do you think a child's ability to reach his or her potential is affected by family structure? Why?
2. How is your relationship with your mother different from that with your father?

3. Crime

"Because he loves me," the young girls said, in response to Dr. Amanda Boyd's question of why they would commit a crime with their romantic partner. They admitted to her that they probably wouldn't have committed the crime if not for their boyfriend.

Dr. Boyd said that, of the girls she met when she volunteered at a facility for juvenile delinquents, only one of them had a father that they knew. They sought the affirmation of men in other, less healthy ways, most likely because of this lack in their life.

Children need a father.⁸ They need a man to look up to, and to emulate (in the case of a boy) or to learn how they should be treated by one (in the

case of a girl). Check out *some of the research* that shows the effect of fatherlessness on our kids.

This isn't some ideological stance that is particular to the Church. Even *Oprah* talks about how "daddyless daughters" struggle with self-worth. Secular authors write about how *dating a woman without a father* has particular challenges and that women can have *Fatherless Daughter Syndrome*. There's a *Fatherless Daughter Project* just for them. There's loads of social science research backing it up.⁹

There are some initiatives out there that seek to alleviate some of these effects, such as "Big Brothers, Big Sisters," and these are laudable. But no one can really take the place of your own father.

Discussion questions:

1. What can our society do to encourage men to be good fathers and to be involved in their children's lives even if they are not married to the child's mother?
2. What can the Church do to help?

4. Fatherhood

In the next clip from *Made for the Common Good*, we hear from Alana Newman, who was conceived by her mother with the contribution of a sperm donor. When Alana received information about her biological father, in the form of some “non-identifying” qualities, she immediately acted upon the information by buying a plane ticket to the country her father was originally from.

What did going to Poland do for Alana? Was it a pointless exercise?

If you're American, chances are good that your family, somewhere down the line, is from somewhere else. Have you ever gone to visit the country your family is from? What was that experience like?

My family is Italian. The first time I went to Italy, I thought, “Wow, these people all look like me!” When I went into stores, the shop owners didn't immediately switch to English, as they did with other tourists. Once I was dressed in a long skirt that friends joked was my “gypsy skirt” and sitting outside a church; a little girl pulled at her mother and pointed at me, asking her mother to give me money. (There are a number of Romani who beg outside churches in that area). Clearly, I blend in

perfectly in Italy, despite having lived my whole life in the U.S. I experience an almost instinctive belonging there, because when I look around, I see people who look like me. We obviously share some genes!

That's what Alana could find by going to Poland. She could sit in a café and look at people walking by and try to see her own face and body type in them. She would probably feel at least some of what I feel in Italy—instinctive belonging due to similarity in looks. Her father's ancestry is her heritage, even though she has never met him. She shares genes with people in Poland.

If you're interested in learning more about adults who look for information about their sperm donors, *this article* came out this month (February 2017), focusing on one clinic in California. The article looked into how many adults looked to connect with their sperm donor fathers when they came of age. This particular clinic uses “open-identity donation,” where this is an option once the child turns 18, but many clinics are still based on anonymous “donors” where the child has no recourse to knowing the identity of their biological parent.

Discussion questions:

1. Do you think this situation of anonymous sperm and egg donors should be remedied? How?
2. Do you look like your family? How?

5. Human Ecology

Today, the series on *Made for the Common Good* ends with Lucia Luzondo speaking about Pope Francis' concept of "human ecology." Just as the natural world has a proper environment and humanity needs to respect certain limits, so too the human person has a proper environment: the family. The pope wrote about this in *Laudato si'* [LS] (nos. 5, 148, 152, and 155), which focused on "Care for God's Creation."

One of the aspects of human ecology we consider at MUR is the effect of *gender ideology*. As Pope Francis said, "An appreciation of our body as male or female is also necessary for our own self-awareness in an encounter with others different from ourselves" (LS, no. 285). The increasing tendency

to separate sex and gender and to promote a false anthropology in which one's natural reality is inconsequential to one's psyche today is dangerous. It will not lead to peace or joy.

Made for the Common Good, was created in order to elucidate the concept of the common good of society and how marriage contributes to it. We have looked at the effect that the marriage of one's parents has on one's development, and the way that other forms of family structure can be detrimental to a child. We have looked at the way that strong marriages in the community are of benefit to everyone, adding stability to neighborhoods and keeping kids out of jail.

Discussion questions:

1. What else do you think is affected by marriage?
2. How can we, as members of the Church, spread the good news of marriage and the family today?

Notes

- 1 G.K. Chesterton. "The Wildest of Adventures," in *Brave New Family*, ed. Alvaro de Silva (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990, p. 51).
- 2 There are many studies that show this. One article about family structure is: W. Bradford Wilcox, "Family Structure Matters – Science Proves It," *National Review*, <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/425957/family-structure-matters-science-proves-it-w-bradford-wilcox> (accessed February 9, 2017).
- 3 Nicholas Zill, "Even in Unsafe Neighborhoods, Kids Are Safer in Married Families," *Institute for Family Studies*, <http://family-studies.org/even-in-unsafe-neighborhoods-kids-are-safer-in-married-families/> (accessed February 9, 2017).
- 4 Dwyer Gunn, "What's Marriage Got to Do With Poverty?" *Pacific Standard*, <https://psmag.com/what-s-marriage-got-to-do-with-poverty-369336f72f8#.6geruwigb> (accessed February 9, 2017).
- 5 For an article about young men's approach to marriage, see W. Bradford Wilcox and Nicholas H. Wolfinger, "Hey Guys, Put a Ring on It," *National Review*, <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/444746/marriage-benefits-men-financial-health-sex-divorce-caveat> (accessed February 10, 2017).
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 An interesting (secular) take on this need is Paul Raeburn, *Do Fathers Matter?* (New York: Scientific American, 2014).
- 9 There are too many studies out there to even begin to do a systematic review. Here's a nice simple one from 2014: Anna Sutherland, "Yes, Father Absence Causes the Problems It's Associated With," *Institute for Family Studies*, <http://family-studies.org/yes-father-absence-causes-the-problems-its-associated-with/> (accessed February 10, 2017).