

Promoting and Sustaining Marriage as a Community of Life and Love

Social Sciences and Theology Colloquium Creighton University October 24-25, 2005

Introductory Remarks

Thank you, Fr. Schlegel and Archbishop Curtiss, for your kind words of introduction and of welcome both to Creighton University and to the Archdiocese of Omaha. The Bishops' Committee on Marriage and Family Life is very pleased to be here and to accept your hospitality during our colloquium.

I want to make two points briefly by way of introducing our program. First, this colloquium is a collaborative effort of the Committee and the Center for Marriage and Family at Creighton. As such, it is part of a ten-year record of cooperation between the two groups. Prior to this program, the Committee and the Center have worked together on three national research projects – all delving into an aspect of marriage and pastoral ministry. In 1995 the Center produced a ground-breaking study on the effectiveness of marriage preparation programs. Three years later there was a very important study on the similarities and differences between couples in inter-church and same-church marriages. Two years after that, we completed a study on couples married from one to five years. Each of these national studies has been recognized in the field of social science research and in pastoral ministry circles as being very authoritative and influential. Each of them and all three together have cast a spotlight on the importance of good marriages for church and for society. In addition, these research projects have given us helpful, practical tools for understanding and responding to couples and families. For this record of achievement and collaboration I especially want to thank Dr. Michael Lawler, Mrs. Gail Risch, and Sr. Barbara Markey who are the persons responsible for developing the Center for Marriage and Family here at Creighton.

My second point is to call attention to the project that brings us here this evening. The project is the bishops' National Pastoral Initiative on Marriage whose broad outline is described on a handout in your folders. This Initiative has a strong component of consultation and dialogue. Our colloquium is an example of consultation and dialogue. And the very title of the colloquium discloses the specific purpose of this consultation and dialogue, namely, "promoting and sustaining marriage as a community of life and love". Indeed this is a challenge larger than any one academic discipline or institution. It is larger than the scope of church ministry alone. It is a task

that has personal, societal, and ecclesial dimensions. I think it's a prime example of common ground on which we can all gather and put forth our best efforts.

And that's exactly what our colloquium is all about: bringing the best thinking of social scientists and theologians together in a dialogue and common search for three things: first, a search for points of convergence and agreement in how we understand marriage and why we value it; second, a search for ways of connecting the wisdom that comes from both theology and social science with the questions, needs, and aspirations coming from those preparing for marriage and from couples who are living a married life; and third, a search for implications and practical strategies that could help both the church and society to promote and sustain marriage as a community of life and love. So, even though we are gathered here in an academic setting and are blessed with the presence of fine scholars, we are not simply going to have an academic and scholarly discussion. I hope we will have a lively, informative, and candid discussion that draws upon all the scholarly resources available to help all of us to strengthen marriage as foundational institution in society and as a living sacrament of the Church and its saving Lord.

Thank you all for coming. I look forward to hearing from everybody as we start the conversation after dinner this evening.