



Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth

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

January 17, 2014

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. 9) 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. We are well aware of the disappointing June 2013 Supreme Court decision that struck down part of the Defense of Marriage Act.

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 Extraordinary Synod on pastoral challenges to the family in the context of evangelization, to be held in Rome October 2014. We are also grateful 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. 9 (included 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 the family as the domestic church.

Call to Prayer for Life, Marriage, and Religious Liberty – As you will recall, at our most recent plenary meeting in November 2013, we voted to extend this prayerful initiative, which invites our people to fast and pray for the ongoing work to build a culture of life and marriage and to protect religious liberty. During National Marriage Week, dioceses and parishes might consider promoting Friday February 7 as a day of fasting and abstinence for the particular intention of a greater reverence for the gift of marriage and family in our nation and for the healing of those suffering from troubled or

broken marriages, especially children. 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 planning 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.

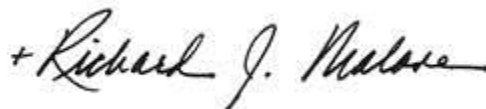
World Marriage Day – Resources for celebrating World Marriage Day (Sunday, Feb. 9), sponsored by Worldwide Marriage Encounter, are available at <http://wmd.wwme.org>. World Marriage Day, now in its 32nd consecutive year, received the Apostolic Blessing of Bl. Pope John Paul II in 1993.

National Marriage Week USA – Lastly, National Marriage Week, now in its fifth 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 Rev. Richard J. Malone
Bishop of Buffalo
Chairman
Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth

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