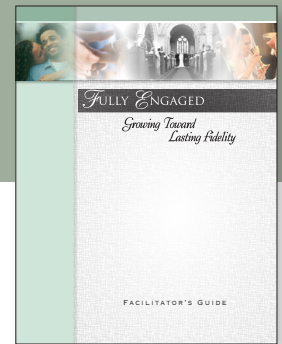


# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE



## Excerpts from The Facilitator's Guide

# SECTION 13 † THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

### Opening Prayer

*O God of love, time and time again, your love for all people  
is likened to a marriage covenant.  
So greatly exalted is this divine institution that  
the Church celebrates it as one of the seven Sacraments.  
Send us your Spirit of understanding as we talk about marriage  
as a Sacrament and what that means for us in our daily lives.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

### What the Church has to say

*Marriage is a precious sign, for 'when a man and a woman celebrate the sacrament of marriage, God is, as it were, 'mirrored' in them; he impresses in them his own features and the indelible character of his love. Marriage is the icon of God's love for us. Indeed, God is also communion: the three Persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit live eternally in perfect unity. And this is precisely the mystery of marriage: God makes of the two spouses one single existence'. This has concrete daily consequences, because the spouses, 'in virtue of the sacrament, are invested with a true and proper mission, so that, starting with the simple ordinary things of life they can make visible the love with which Christ loves his Church and continues to give his life for her.'" (Francis, Apostolic Exhortation On Love in the Family, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 121)*

### 70. When we are married, I hope to have regular date nights with my spouse. (Yes)

#### **Discussion:**

- How often would you like to have date nights, after you are married?
- How will you keep working on your marriage relationship?
- How will you make time to be with your spouse?

#### **Additional Information:**

Couples often presume that once they are married, intentional dating of each other can and even should end. But the opposite is actually the case. In order for them not to take each other and their marriage for granted, couples should be purposeful about setting time aside just for each other, for recreation, discussion, and growth. Explore the reasons or obstacles the couple perceives to regular dating. The purpose of this dating is not just time to solve conflicts or review up-coming calendars. The goal is to have fun, enjoy each other's company and renew their relationship.

Dates do not necessarily need to include going out, but it is important to set time aside for each other. Parents of small children, a lack of finances, or other obligations can make it difficult to go out for a date. While it is recommended that the courtship type date is part of the couple's priorities, "in house" dates, for example, candle light dinner after the children go to bed, can help a couple's relationship stay strong.

## 81. We understand what we will be promising when we exchange our marriage vows. (Yes)

### **Discussion:**

- Ask the couple to refer to their answers to Reflection Question #2 on page 30 in the *Couple's Workbook*.
  - *At this point, can you honestly say that you are entering this marriage "without coercion, freely and wholeheartedly?"*
  - *If not, what obstacles related to coercion, freedom or wholeheartedness are you experiencing?*
- What is your understanding of the marriage vows?
- What will you be promising to each other?
- What will you be promising to God?

Note: It is appropriate to invite them to sign the *Confidential Pledge* on page 30 of the *Couple's Workbook* if they have not already done so.

### **Additional Information:**

This item is highlighted because it is essential that the couple understands what they are promising when they say "I do." If sufficient knowledge is not present, the marriage can start off on shaky grounds. That said, the Church does not expect a couple to understand all the complexities that are involved with this vocation, before it is actually entered into. Does the couple have sufficient knowledge of what they are promising? That is the point of this item.

### **What the Church has to say:**

*"Marriage is brought about through the consent of the parties...no human power can replace this consent...an act of the will by which a man and a woman, through an irrevocable covenant, mutually give and accept each other in order to establish marriage." (Code of Canon Law, c. 1057)*

*"If this freedom is lacking the marriage is invalid." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1628)*

*"...marriage [is] the covenant of conjugal love freely and consciously chosen, whereby man and woman accept the intimate community of life and love willed by God himself." (John Paul II, The Apostolic Exhortation on the Family, *Familiaris consortio*, no. 11)*

*"Sexual union, lovingly experienced and sanctified by the sacrament, is in turn a path of growth in the life of grace for the couple. It is the 'nuptial mystery'. The meaning and value of their physical union is expressed in the words of consent, in which they accepted and offered themselves each to the other, in order to share their lives completely. Those words give meaning to the sexual relationship and free it from ambiguity. More generally, the common life of husband and wife, the entire network of relations that they build with their children and the world around them, will be steeped in and strengthened by the grace of the sacrament. For the sacrament of marriage flows from the incarnation and the paschal mystery, whereby God showed the fullness of his love for humanity by becoming one with us. Neither of the spouses will be alone in facing whatever challenges may come their way. Both are called to respond to God's gift with commitment, creativity, perseverance and daily effort. They can always invoke the assistance of the Holy Spirit who consecrated their union, so that his grace may be felt in every new situation that they encounter." (Francis, Apostolic Exhortation On Love in the Family, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 74)*